

PATRICIA'S  
AWAKENING

HAROLD JAMES BARRETT



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BY  
HAROLD JAMES BARRETT

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PART ONE  
A GIRL OF TO-DAY



# Patricia's Awakening

## CHAPTER I

"Now there's an example, an extreme case, I'll admit." Mrs. Grimshaw frowned disapprovingly as Patricia Keller cleared the veranda steps in one leap, flung her golf sticks into the tonneau, stepped on the starter and shot down the hotel driveway. "She was one of a crowd who came in at one o'clock this morning unchaperoned. I heard them under my window. When I was a girl," and the elderly widow was embarked upon her favorite theme.

"Oh, Pat will come out all right," defended Mrs. Drew. "Despite her gorgeous looks, she has brains. And isn't she a superb looking creature?"

"I must say I can't altogether agree with you, on either point." Mrs. Grimshaw emphasized her opinion by fanning with increased vigor. Although the chill waters of

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the Atlantic spread before her, the phantom breaths which barely rippled the surface of the bay were warm from sun-drenched inland fields.

“There’s something blatant about her appearance—like a girl on a magazine cover. Of course she’s rouged the way they all are nowadays. And as for brains, why, it’s disgraceful the sort of education they get at those fashionable finishing schools. I quizzed her one morning and she doesn’t know a Manet from a Monet, and had an idea that Jane Austen was a popular actress. But then, you can’t altogether blame her. She hasn’t much background. I don’t think the Kellers are persons of culture.” Mrs. Grimshaw was a person of culture.

“No, I wouldn’t bank on Pat’s education,” conceded Mrs. Drew with a smile. “Not an intellectual type, perhaps a bit hoidenish. But so many intellectual people lack brains and so many people of no particular culture are often extremely intelligent. They think directly, I mean; not through the prism of ready-made ideas. And that’s what I like about Pat.”



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Mrs. Grimshaw's silence was eloquent. The two women seldom agreed. Mrs. Grimshaw was from Boston; Mrs. Drew from Kansas City.

"Where's Helen?" Patricia strode through the club impatiently. "Helen Trescott—anybody seen her?" Nobody had.

"I'll play you a round," suggested Freddie Elliott, sleek and blond, who sat in a shaded corner of the porch, his sweater flung nonchalantly across his chairback, the black H conspicuously displayed, proclaiming his achievements. Patricia shook her head. She was eschewing athletic men that season.

"They're so dull," she complained. "And so amusingly vain about their fame. Nor do you ever hear of them after their college days except as stockbrokers or politicians or lawyers. Of course every man ought to keep fit, but I mean the specialists, the varsity men. They're not my ideal." Many men had devoted earnest thought to this question of Patricia's ideal. Once established one might perhaps play up to it. But she was irritatingly vague and negative in her description

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and, what was worse, she herself confessed that it was constantly changing. She had, however, condescended to be rather more explicit than usual one evening at the Lockhart's when, as one of a group watching the moon rise over the bay, a mood of unwonted sentiment had descended.

“Oh, I've never met anyone in the least like him,” she affirmed. “But he's quaint and quizzical and not interested in making money. And he's tall and awkward and very simple in worldly things and very big, I mean his nature, and everyone trusts him, men and women and children and animals, and people could cheat him without his knowing it, but nobody does, and he's a gentleman in a sense that nobody I've ever known is, though he ignores etiquette. And he's very, very wise in the things that really count. He's something like Lincoln but less practical. And he'd think our crowd was just about the nuttiest bunch he'd ever seen, but he wouldn't feel superior; he finds something to like in 'most everybody. All kinds of people who have cheap shoddy standards: family or breeding or money or success: would nevertheless have to respect him and—oh, I don't know. Sometimes I've seen men

who looked something like him in the Rocky Mountain states but—well, I'm certainly getting maudlin. Where's the shaker?"

Next morning Wolcott Rogers who had lengthened a two weeks' stay to two months returned to New York. "First time I ever saw a man get his *coup de grâce* in public," was Alec Sennett's comment. But Patricia when the subject was revived had laughed cynically and disclaimed all responsibility for her portrait. "It was just a mood," she asserted, and changed the subject.

"Some looker!" exclaimed a new arrival as Patricia drove away. "And say! when the sun caught her hair. Those gold glints! Why didn't you introduce me?"

"That's what I said to a fellow once," was Freddie's reply. "Later he did. And I became specimen number 62,478. That was last summer. Now you want to become case number 71,647. If you consider that a distinction, I'll frame it up. That's Patricia Keller."

"Oh, it is! I heard about her out in Santa Barbara last winter. She'd just gone down to Coronado. She was at Miss Prentice's with my sister, but I never met her. Well, she's all they said and then some."



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"Eats 'em alive," was Elliott's morose comment. "Have a drink?"

Patricia was just as well pleased that Helen Trescott had forgotten her appointment. Ever since she "came out" five years before, her life, as she looked back upon it, seemed to her as if lived in a perpetual crowd. Five years crammed with a ceaseless feverish round of trivialities: dances, football games, weekend parties, bridge, the theatre, Yale proms, Harvard Class Days. Five years filled with lovers, "affaires," flirtations; suitors of every type—some gay and gallant, some solemn and portentous, some flaccid and dog-like in their adoration, one or two unpleasant in the process of being replaced. She was at twenty-five as yet unmarried, this being a source of irritation to her mother who bore her responsibilities far from lightly.

Helen's absence gave her a free afternoon. She would for once spend it by herself. Had she lost the power to dream, she wondered, that precious gift which had so enriched her life during her girlhood? Turning northward, she drove leisurely through shaded roads and fields strewn with a creamy fall of wild

carrot. White farmhouses, many of them dating back apparently to New England's colonial days, drowsed contentedly in the afternoon sun.

"What a happy peaceful countryside," Patricia mused. But within herself she felt the tug of a vague longing, the stir of an undefined unrest. Swinging finally to the eastward, she found herself upon the shore road. A cow-path lured her out upon a bold point and she pulled up at last by the pebbled beach. The sea, a gleaming sapphire, flecked with faint flaws from the light off-shore breeze, mirrored a few white clouds drifting listlessly to the east. She inhaled the warm air, sweet with the commingled fragrance of bayberry and the ocean. A rug from the car softened the sharp surfaces of the granite and Patricia settled herself snugly within the shadow of an overhanging ledge and lighted a cigarette. The waves splashed placidly at her feet. She gazed idly over the glittering floor for awhile then opened a book.

Mrs. Grimshaw's criticism of the girl was, in great measure, merited. Patricia was in any orthodox sense far from well educated. Most decidedly she was not "intellectual."

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To use a Shavian comparison, she belonged in Horseback Hall rather than in Heartbreak House; at least that was her pose. It was part of her pose to pretend to Mrs. Grimshaw that she had never heard of Jane Austen although as a matter of fact that English author had been a part of her prescribed reading at school. The confusing element in Patricia, however, was that she was quite likely to remark to some startled swain after a couple of weeks' acquaintance:

"How do you like my pose? I've been doing 'Peg o' my Heart' for you, but I'm tired of it. To-morrow I'll begin another rôle, something more sophisticated, yet not too much so. My range is, after all, rather limited, being a blonde. Cuts me out of vamp rôles, for example."

With Mrs. Drew, however, Patricia was herself and it was from her that she had borrowed the little volume which she now scanned in a mood of lazy content. Written by a famous nerve specialist, it dealt with his formula for living. There were four elements, he asserted, upon the correct relationship of which a life's mental health and happiness depended. They were Work, Play,



Love and Worship. "The second is the only factor I have," she thought, and with a sense, for the moment, of distaste she recalled the men to whom she had given her lips and of how little it had meant.

A warm-blooded, vital, vigorous girl, Patricia hungered for love in its complete manifestation. It was this insistence of hers upon all or nothing, her instinctive realization that upon this perhaps more than upon any other single factor her happiness depended which explained her impatient and ruthless rejection of her lovers, upon their failure to measure up. Sometimes in moods of disillusionment she questioned the reality of love. Obviously it was of rare occurrence. Yet so intense was Patricia's nature that rather than compromise, rather than accept a man because he was, by her mother's standard, thoroughly eligible, she would, she assured herself, remain unmarried.

And yet, she reflected, how many millions of girls have longed for love only to be drugged by the senses into a makeshift matrimony which became after a few years an intolerable yoke to be borne philosophically by both for the sake of the children. Patricia's mind, as her friend had said, had a penetrating quality

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which enabled her to be honest with herself and which drove like a knife into others' pretensions. But of what avail is the individual brain when smothered beneath the age-old passions, the pull of man to woman? The force to which the entire vast and incomprehensible drama of humanity traces?

The mellowed light of late afternoon gilded with glamour the sails of a passing schooner when Patricia, stretching with the sheer sensuous pleasure of a cat in the sun, arose and started toward home. She would, she concluded, surprise her father, and tender him the doubtful pleasure of a drive home. Patricia's driving was trying to the nerves of the elderly. A few miles brought her to another path which led eastward and after bumping over ruts and boulders for a half mile, she halted at the crest of a bold promontory, the seaward section of which had been ruthlessly ravaged by her father's steam drills and dynamite to form a breakwater for a neighboring harbor.

The Keller Construction Company was, in its field, a national institution and, ever since babyhood, Patricia had been familiar with the terminology of this picturesque and highly hazardous pursuit. Twice in her own life, her

father had come such serious croppers through bad weather conditions or bids proffered too low that the Kellers had had to revise their living standards completely and, for a period, drop out of the gay world which seemed to Patricia her birthright. From her vantage point, she could look down into the floor of the quarry, a hundred feet beneath. The drillers sat astride their steam steeds which hammered away, biting into the hard granite with a nervous frenzy, a kind of vicious intensity, as though time pressed and the enemy must be overcome. The heavy traveling cranes picked up the fractured granite from a previous blast and, pirouetting with amusing and almost coquettish dexterity, carried their load to the waiting cars which at intervals ran out upon the dock to the dump scows.

Patricia could distinguish her father's heavy, stubby figure as he strolled about with the superintendent, Jerry O'Hearn, and a stranger, nattily dressed, she noted, in a smartly cut gray suit.

Suddenly a voice yelled with long-drawn-out intonation, "Fi-yah!" Patricia recognized it as "Fire," the warning signal for a blast, or in the parlance of the business, a



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“shot.” The excitable Italians began running frantically to safety. There was no great need of haste but everyone enjoyed pretending that there was. Four or five dark Sicilians suddenly materialized from beneath and rushed at Patricia, gesticulating violently. “Da shotta! da shotta!” they announced in hysterical accents. “Dey fire da shotta! Run lika hella!” and they waved their arms despairingly. Patricia smiled and drove to a safe point whence she could observe the effect of “da shotta.”

Her father, the stranger and Jerry, she saw, disdained to leave the quarry floor but crouched behind a traveling crane. The powder-man with his battery was not far from her and as his arms pressed down on the plunger, the earth heaved, a deafening, rasping, cataclysmic roar rent the air, and a huge mass of the perpendicular wall of the quarry was lifted outward in a solid section to crash in chaos beneath. As the dust and smoke drifted to leeward, Patricia's father spied her on the height. Accompanied by his companion, he climbed the winding pathway which brought him finally to where she sat.

“Hello, Pat. Saw the shot—eh? Let me

present Mr. Wellington. He's coming back to the hotel with us for dinner."

A naturally keen observer, and inclined to interpret character by those little details which reveal so much, Patricia was amused by Wellington's easy air of proprietorship as he swung in beside her leaving her father to the lonely dignity of the tonneau. Most men were inclined to defer to John B. Keller. But this man, she concluded instantly, deferred to no one.

He was, she guessed, in his early thirties. With his large, full head well set upon broad shoulders, his deep chest and well-muscled body which would, if not kept in condition, easily become portly, Richard Beale Wellington usually impressed people as being several years older than his actual age. Handsome in a dark tropical fashion, with a mouth firm, though full lipped, and features which vaguely recalled to Patricia's memory busts of Roman emperors, he would, she reflected, appeal strongly to the primitive type of woman. And to that sort of woman he would be a brutal master. His hands, the nails carefully manicured, were, she observed, unpleasantly thick, with blunt fingers.

“He himself,” she commented inwardly, “is essentially simple, although not without guile, a ‘health and wealth’ type; sensual, egotistical, very possibly a Don Juan. And that round skull spells the opportunist. He thinks concretely”—all this as they chattered idly, flashing past cove and headland, the former em-purpled in the luminous shadows of the waning day. Wellington, it developed, was also a contractor, occasionally a competitor. Ordinarily, however, his firm confined itself chiefly to railroad work while Keller figured more in the marine field.

The man had a certain quiet dignity; he was responsive without being over-affable, which Patricia found likeable. He seemed so much more of a man than her Country Club crowd, so many of whom had inherited titular honors and even in middle age seemed immature, unseasoned. Wellington, she felt certain, had fought his way up and in a business which, in a commercial sense, requires more cold courage than almost any other. Under the influence of the man’s personality, she felt herself revising her first snap judgment. It occurred to her to wonder if he were married. With



some finesse, she maneuvered the conversation to reveal this point naturally. There was a certain simple pathos in his frank, "No, I'm not married. I married young but we were not suited to each other. So we separated."

Keller took no part in their talk but leaned back in his corner, occasionally taking a pull at his cigar. He was apparently rapt in some business problem; was, as a matter of fact, working out in his mind the details of the merger which he was contemplating with Wellington's interests. Behind that bland red face and genial manner, which were a fit index to John B. Keller in the rôle of husband and father, was a shrewd brain which was not too particular about ethics when there was enough at stake.

Keller's living came from the money appropriated by Congress in the River and Harbor Bill. After the politicians at Washington had agreed among themselves as to the apportionment of the contents of the pork barrel, the government engineers drew up specifications upon which sealed bids were submitted by competing contractors. Upon more than one occasion, Keller's bid, the lowest, had

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shaved its nearest competitor by a suspiciously narrow margin. It was implied that there had been a leak.

Then there was that unfortunate promotion enterprise, unfortunate, that is, for the investors. It was a granite quarry to be developed for building stone, paving blocks and monumental work, a line in which Keller had no experience. He took an option on the property, however; incorporated, and floated the stock through some obscure Wall Street investment brokers. The prospectus promised a great deal and Keller's name helped. It never paid, however, and some people questioned if Keller had ever had much faith in it. The receiver discovered that he had sold his stock in the midst of the brisk promotion campaign. Legal? Perfectly. But it looked strange.

Patricia knew nothing of this phase of her father's activities. To her he was a kind, indulgent comrade, to be bullied occasionally for his own good, to be affectionately patronized, to be petted and his hair tenderly ruffled when he was especially generous. She was the apple of his eye, a fact which she had always taken for granted. Her brother, Clifford, a sub-Freshman at Harvard, was her

mother's favorite, Patricia, her father's. It was his hope that she would marry into some family whose wealth had a more solid foundation than his own, realizing as he did the inevitable risks of his business. It was already a question in his mind whether the Bellport Breakwater had not been figured too low. Hence his interest in Wellington's proposal.

The islands off Shannon's Point were be-dreamed in twilight mists when Patricia pulled up at the hotel. "No," she was asserting when the engine ceased its throbbing, "one need point to but one idyllically happy marriage to prove the existence of love. What if ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths fail?"

"Well, point to it," challenged Wellington. They had drifted to the subject through the little book which he had noted on the seat beside him. "It is tragic or comic, people's pathetic optimism in the face of all the evidence to the contrary; tragic to the serious, comic to the cynical. But certainly it is clear that love is but a glossing over, an attempt at transmutation of a primitive universal instinct. Hence every marriage finally degenerates into futile bickerings or bovine content, depending



entirely upon circumstance and the dispositions of the principals."

"Well, I have a primitive pull toward the dinner table," she asserted. "And there perhaps we'll fight it out further."

"It would be mildly amusing to make you eat your words, Mr. Wellington," she reflected as the two men were enveloped in the gay throng which crowded the broad veranda at this hour. "But it wouldn't prove anything." She drove back to the garage, parked the car, and dashed upstairs, to reappear shortly, radiant in an arresting costume of orchid crêpe-de-Chine designed to do complete justice to her delicate blonde loveliness.

## CHAPTER II

"BUT, Mother, don't you see? That's just another of your Victorian notions. The difference between our viewpoints is not merely the inevitable difference of mother and daughter. It reflects the gulf that separates your generation from mine. The world has moved a lot since you were a girl in the seventies." Patricia had an air of patient tolerance as though correcting a well-meaning but unsophisticated child.

"Moved backwards," was Mrs. Keller's grim comment. She was a fashionably, too fashionably, dressed woman in her fifties whose unfashionable tendency toward flesh she sought to disguise by an obvious and elaborate system of tortured corseting. The two women spoke in subdued tones so that their neighbors on the porch of the Tudor Arms should not overhear.

"No, it's just different," protested Patricia. "It seems to me, too, that we are more honest in our thinking. Take the very point at issue. I take a man out for an evening's sail in the

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*Tadpole.* The wind drops and we get in at three o'clock. You say I should have stayed inshore to avoid the chance of such an occurrence; that in your day such an incident would have cost a girl her reputation. All I can say about your generation is '*honi soit qui mal y pense.*' Furthermore, I can't get it clear whether your objection is politic or ethical. Anyway I can assure you that I won't be ostracised, if that is what you fear."

"I don't fear it. Nothing but murder, apparently, warrants ostracising nowadays. What I wanted you to realize was this. It isn't as though Mr. Wellington were a college undergraduate. He is a man in his thirties. You've known him only two weeks. What do any of us know about him except that he is socially presentable and a business associate of your father? Doubtless his Bradstreet rating is good but that isn't the point. I am older than you and I can just feel in that man that he's the kind that doesn't respect women. He's the sort that would try to kiss a pretty girl, if opportunity offered, after he'd met her a half dozen times."

"Three times, Mother," interrupted Patricia.

"Exactly," continued Mrs. Keller in dour triumph. "And still you compromise yourself with him and wonder why I, your mother, should object. Here he is now." From Mrs. Keller's wan smile Wellington deduced that he had been under adverse criticism. The deal with Wellington closed, Keller had two weeks previous left for the Gulf coast to oversee the inauguration of a new contract, leaving the younger man to handle the Bellport project. Living at the same hotel and so closely connected commercially, it was inevitable that he should be in constant contact with Patricia. The man had qualities to which she responded.

Reacting from the frankly pagan golf-mad group of which she had formed one the previous summer, she had gravitated toward a semi-artistic set which read the *Little Review* and knew the difference between a monotype and an aquatint. The chain of rather obtrusively expensive summer resorts which extended along this part of the New England coast offered a varied assortment of *milieus* to a girl like Patricia whose charm and beauty opened all doors. But Julian Talbot's aphorisms began to pall upon repetition and Pamela



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Sheldon's chatter lifted bodily from *Vanity Fair* and *The Spur* seemed less stimulating after one had read the original. Wellington was refreshingly himself or was at least genuinely the section of himself which he condescended to expose. So although he spent his days at the quarry, on the floating stock, or in Boston, Patricia unconsciously drifted into the habit of counting upon his evenings. She introduced him to her crowd which found him piquant in his blindness to the subtle shades which they considered significant.

Madge Culver, olive-skinned, dark-haired with dreaming dark eyes, was inclined to idealize him. "He is the spirit of to-day personified," she asserted. "All that bright keen hardness, that Napoleonic directness which is America. And his work! Isn't it truly romantic? Wrestling with the blind forces of nature to further the ends of commerce. He moulds granite to his grim resolve! Seems symbolic somehow—doesn't it?" She sulked for a half hour when Jack Ingersoll offered to set it to music. Madge had literary aspirations.

He did not score very strongly with the men, however. "There's something about that



chap Wellington, something I can't put my finger on which I don't like," was Ingersoll's verdict. "There's something of the leopard about him, a cold selfishness. He isn't reliable."

But Patricia danced with him, sailed with him, flirted with him. "He intrigues me," she confessed. The word was not yet shopworn.

"The *Valiant* is in," announced Wellington, lighting his perfecto with the ritualistic air which marks the first cigar of the day, the after breakfast smoke. "They just 'phoned me from the quarry."

"Oh, I want to see it! I'll drive down with you." The *Valiant* was a new tug purchased by Keller in New York and Patricia, who had sailed a boat from the age of twelve, had been looking forward to its arrival.

"And Mrs. Keller?" suggested Wellington politely.

But Mrs. Keller pleaded a meeting of a Bazaar committee.

"A beauty, isn't she, Jerry?" Patricia glanced along the length of the new boat with an appraising eye.

"Ought to be, Miss Patricia. She cost

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nearly a hundred thousand. Beauty comes high, but it's worth it." The old Irishman's grin implied that he was trying to pay a compliment. He had known Patricia from the cradle. In its fresh coat of paint and its bright-work shining as on a private yacht, the big tug looked smart and shipshape.

"We'll take her out for a run around the island as soon as they finish coaling," suggested Wellington.

"I'd love it. And we'll get up some parties for moonlight nights. That will be piquant. Sailing parties on a tug boat." They climbed up to the pilot house where the captain, a taciturn Swede, sat reading a copy of a cheap magazine devoted to Western stories. He seemed dazed at Patricia's advent but soon melted. Sensing entertainment possibilities in the new boat she meant to enlist its captain's allegiance. She exclaimed with pleasure as they cast off and the reversed propeller churned the water. A fresh easterly breeze brought the color to her cheeks, the boat rocked gracefully to a light ground swell; Patricia who passionately loved the sea felt that only some absurd subjective inhibition prevented her from flying as easily and lightly as the

white gulls which soared about the stack. Circling Crooksmouth Island they swung out to sea for a bit, finally bringing up at the dock within the hour.

"She's all right," was Wellington's verdict. He had spent half the time in the engine room. "Of course your father had her surveyed before he bought her."

As they made their way through the quarry, Patricia studied the friendly Italian faces which scanned her in shy admiration. From her years of contact with the race, remote as it was, she had developed a very real affection for it. They were so gay and childishly cheerful under conditions which seemed to her to make it difficult. Some of these men had been working for her father for fifteen years, traveling from job to job, up and down the coast and even out to the Great Lakes.

She was in the very heart of the hive. Cranes spun in lurid arcs shifting twenty-ton blocks with nice precision. The staccato clamor of the batteries of steam drills quickened her blood, heightened her color. The place seemed keyed unbearably high and the ragged wraiths of steam tossed restlessly before the fresh sea breeze lent the final note.



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"Jazz," she murmured, and her eyes danced. She realized, she thought, why the men who follow that pursuit can seldom be induced to retire when assured a comfortable fortune. Each contract is a hazardous gamble with a hundred incalculable factors. And from their work they gain the excitement which civilized man, ridden by atavistic impulses to which he responds but fails to comprehend, craves and too often seeks in drink and debauchery.

"Meester Welleenton, Meester Welleenton!" A walking boss, Tony Cellini, came clambering hurriedly up the bank, tipping his hat respectfully. Cellini was a man of some position among his compatriots. His wife with the aid of a girl ran one of the shacks on the hill in which the men ate and slept. Cellini himself was a sort of padrone. Almost all of the sixty men who boarded at his table had been secured by him through obscure methods which involved considerable correspondence with relatives in Italy.

"Joe de Polo, he leava tree days. Go to worka Bellport Granite." Cellini waved his hand in the direction of a building stone quarry some three miles distant. "He comma back lassa night. Taka one—two—tree—four

men. More money. Maka mad. Maka keepa way. He say, 'Comma back, getta more.' " Cellini's voice shrilled excitedly. He had a financial interest in the men's remaining.

"De Polo? Fellow with light hair?"

"Si. Badda man."

"Tell O'Hearn." Wellington cut him short, but he was vexed at the news. "Why don't they go up to the city and get their own men?" he grumbled. Leaving the quarry behind, they climbed over the brow of the hill. Patricia had left her car near the road.

"Who's that skulking around the boarding house, I wonder? I'll bet it's that dago. I'll teach him," and at a half run he approached the renegade. Patricia stood watching. She could not hear them clearly but from the pantomime, Wellington ordered him off; the Italian replied pertly and Wellington promptly knocked him down. The man, a little chap, showed no fight. As he tried to slink off, Wellington sprang at him with a sort of feline fury, knocking him down again, and began to kick him savagely. As he arose, Wellington seemed completely to lose control of himself and once more bore him down. Pa-

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tricia's heart began to quicken. Was he going to kill the man? De Polo lay limp and semi-conscious when Wellington finally ceased. After a few moments he seemed to revive and crept off holding one arm as though it were broken. Wellington straightened his tie, picked up his hat and breathing heavily from his exertions approached her. His eyes glared strangely.

"That's that," he remarked. "He'll stay away for awhile. He'll bear the marks of that for weeks. Hope it didn't bother you. I had to settle it when the chance offered. They're only cattle and have got to be treated rough."

"I'd certainly call that rough. I don't call it a very sporting thing. The man was outweighed thirty pounds and so far as I could see was willing enough to quit after you knocked him down."

"You don't expect a fight to resemble a game of ping pong."

Patricia seemed to detect an apologetic tone.

"Well, here's the car," he continued. "I'm sorry about the row. Just remember the trip in the *Valiant*."

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But Patricia could not forget the expression of his face when he was kicking his victim. "What jungle trait was that?" she reflected. "I wonder what tale the ex-Mrs. Wellington has to tell?"



### CHAPTER III

“SAY, Pat, you ought to get down to the quarry. That new super is all Dad said, and then some. I don’t wonder he made such a showing on that Georgia contract. Funny chap to be—”

“Ready about!” called Patricia as she swung the tiller over, and the *Tadpole* with mainsail flapping rounded the buoy off Bosun’s Ledge. It was a puffy August day and the little half-rater was tender. Clifford shifted to the weather side.

“Funny chap to be in this work,” continued her brother. “The Parson, Captain Tucker calls him. Parson Gordon. He came up with him from the Blake’s Point job and the Captain says he’s ‘there.’ Says he thought he was just a theorist at first but had to admit he got the stone out. He’s a quiet chap, but there’s something about him that you like.”

Patricia slacked off the mainsheet as a heavy puff knocked the trim little craft down so far that green water poured over the lee rail.



"Look out!" yelled the youth. "I don't want to soak this suit. Why don't you luff for those knock-downs?"

"Luff your grandmother. Listen to the child. And wasn't I sailing boats when you were on the bottle? How does Jerry like it?"

"Jerry was relieved to have him come. You see this is the first job he was ever put in charge of and he's too old to take new responsibilities. He was worried nearly to death."

"But Wellington's here."

"Yes, but he's a railroad man. It was the floating stock that got on Jerry's nerves. But what I mean is funny—you know how every super you ever heard of is a kind of a bucko mate. Goes around yelling and cursing every little while to put the fear o' God into 'em, as Jerry says. Well, you couldn't picture this fellow in that part. He's got a different slant on the whole thing. Has all kinds of schemes that make the men move more stone, earn more money and get more fun out of the work. It's quite interesting. He'll divide a group into two gangs, say, and offer a prize for the one that loads the greatest number of cars in a morning, or drills the most footage. Then everybody, down to the waterboy, gets a bonus

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on the month's showing of tonnage dumped—keeps everyone on his toes—and things like that. He studies the methods of the fastest worker, whether it's on a drill or loading or handling a crane, and teaches the others—brings 'em up to that standard. They don't have to use any more effort but have less lost motion. He says it's nothing but what they've been doing in factory production for years."

The boy ran on while Patricia watched the peak closely for that hint of a ripple in the sail that would spell cramping. They were close-hauled and she always sailed a boat as though she were in a race, carried full sail when pleasure parties reefed. The eager tug of the tiller, the spindrift whipping her cheeks, the rhythmic surge of the sea to which her whole being seemed attuned—Patricia became fairly drunk with it. With her shining hair, enhaloed by the August sun, she seemed a Norse sea nymph riding the gale. To ship with Patricia on a breezy day was trying to the nervous.

The brother and sister lived in that stimulating state of armed neutrality which generally marks the bond among Americans, a condition which hid a very real affection.

Clifford was a quaint youth; precise, a trifle pedantic, old-fashioned—always pottering about with radio outfits and gas engines and already evincing a strongly defined tendency toward biology. He looked forward to sharing his father's responsibilities with little enthusiasm, considering his parent incredibly slack, unscientific and reckless, a man who must have blundered into success. John Keller studied his son with mingled respect and an instinctive repugnance. He was uneasily aware that somehow the boy's ethics were superior to his own; he respected his demonstrated ability to pull an automobile down and put it together again. But that meticulous old-maidish quality which was a constant source of amusement to Patricia rubbed him on the raw.

"It isn't natural," he protested to his wife. "You can't handle a breakwater job with that kind of a make-up. Maybe I'd better make him a lawyer. He thinks we're a wild gang, all three of us. You'd think he was our grandfather."

"Let's run down to the quarry," suggested Patricia, glancing at her watch. "We can make it in an hour with this wind." She



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swung the helm over. Clifford sprang to the main sheet and eased it off gently as the boat spun around. Characteristically the girl was jibing in a heavy puff.

"You would jibe her," was the boy's withering comment as the light 18-footer staggered beneath the strain and her cockpit filled. "Some day you'll lift the mast out of her."

"Light me a Murad, Cliff. There's a darling," and Patricia broke into

With a wet sheet and a flowing sea  
And a wind that follows fast.

"Nut!" was Clifford's comment. "God help your husband, that's all. You'll shatter his nervous system."

"Then I'll get another. They seem to be easily accumulated. But I won't marry a man of that type."

"Nobody knows whom he'll marry," was the boy's sententious comment. "But I don't know that it makes much difference. After the glamour has gone, I mean. Better pick out someone whose tastes and interests are congenial. Then you're not so bored as otherwise."

"Out of the mouths of babes," Patricia was

derisive. "You're judging by our crowd. They've all got too much money."

"Merely means one less factor to row about. People who have to scrimp argue about money in addition to everything else. But I'll tell you one fellow I'd sidestep and that's Wellington." Clifford became impressively earnest. "I'm a man, Pat, and know life better than you. There's something I don't like about that fellow."

"Thanks for the sideline coaching. You assume too much. Mr. Wellington's intentions are not serious." Patricia laughed lightly.

"They all get serious with you sooner or later. I don't know what it is. I can't see blondes myself. But you are a good looker," he seemed to admit it grudgingly.

"Cliff, you're a scream!" This boy, only a couple of years out of short trousers—her mentor. "I don't know how you got into the family but you're better than the Winter Garden." The boy shrugged his shoulders philosophically. Why waste his wisdom on this scatter-brained blonde? He extracted a pipe and pouch from his pocket and lighted up. It was his one vice. So far as his family knew

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he had never had a drink. "I wish he would take a drink now and then," his father said.

Patricia lay back comfortably, absently watching the green shore slip by. Sailing before the wind as they were, the boat required little attention. She was thinking about Wellington. Her reply to her brother had been disingenuous. Wellington had become decidedly serious. Repelled by him as she had been on sight, he nevertheless had an appeal for her, an appeal which a less clear-visioned girl would have confused with love. He was magnetic and there was a ruthless forthright quality about his lovemaking which stirred the primitive within Patricia. Only the previous evening as they had strolled along the cliffs during an intermission, he had taken her fiercely in his arms and found her lips. The music was throbbing in her veins; the scented fragrance of the summer evening stirred obscure emotions; she yielded her mouth, a wild rose in bloom.

"I love you," and from his voice she saw that he was really shaken.

Suddenly she pulled away. "No, there is more to love. More than either of us has to give the other."



Then he had tried to batter down her will but found her suddenly ice. She had flirted rather openly with Foxy Lorimer for the rest of the evening. And yet—Patricia was nothing if not honest with herself—"I did enjoy that moment in his arms," she had reflected as she sat in the window of her room before retiring. Lulled to sleep by the tender cadence of the sea murmuring musically on the shelving shore beneath, in her dreams she had seemed once more to hear, "I love you."

"Why, there's the *Valiant* now with one of the dump scows." Clifford's voice recalled her to the present. He pointed to a red hulk off the port bow so heavily laden as scarcely to rock to the sea's motion. "Let's run alongside and watch them drop the stone."

Fifteen minutes brought them within hailing distance. After some shifting and maneuvering the crew started to knock out the pins, and the bottom of the scow, composed of heavy doors which when released swung downwards, began to drop the load. The scowmen dashed about frenziedly, yelling in Italian, and reminding Patricia of a band of excited chimpanzees. It seemed a futile performance, dumping rocks into the sea. She wondered

how many thousand loads would be required before some signs appeared above the surface. This breakwater had been under construction by installments, as Congress appropriated the money, for a generation. One after another the bins emptied. The scow's freeboard increased perceptibly with each load released.

"That's Gordon, I think, that chap with the gray cap." Clifford pointed to a tall, lounging figure which evidently was in command. Patricia noted him with vague attention. As the final bin let go, a cry of derision went up. A man had been whipped overboard perhaps by the kick of a released chain. But something was wrong. He did not strike out. The scow was fast drifting away from him. The man in the gray cap suddenly stripped off his coat and dove overboard.

Simultaneously Patricia swung the tiller over and luffed. Clifford let go the jib halliards and they brought up alongside the rescuer and his burden. It was Gordon and the scowman, the latter unconscious, apparently dead. They pulled the Italian aboard and Gordon climbed in soggily.

"All right," he yelled, turning to the tug and waving his arm toward the quarry which

lay three miles down the coast. "We'll take him ashore. Go ahead." Addressing Patricia, he said with a smile, "If you don't mind we'll run straight into Bellport. It's only a mile and there's something wrong with this man." He turned to the scowman who lay inert and dripping, unresponsive to Clifford's sketchy efforts to revive him.

Gordon went briskly to work, loosened the man's belt, turned him on his stomach and lifted him by the middle. A few jerks relieved him of the sea water he had swallowed. Then he began to compress and expand the lower ribs. He worked earnestly and with the quiet competence of a skilful surgeon. Patricia, still at the helm, observed him interestedly. So this was the new superintendent, this kind, finely drawn, thoughtful-looking man in his middle thirties about whom even in his soaked tweeds there hung the air of the student, and in whose clear gray eyes one saw, or seemed to see, an expression of frank innocence.

"Not handsome in any orthodox sense," was her silent comment. "But his face has distinction. And the expression, such serenity and poise." She felt superfluous, sitting steering



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while a tense struggle for a life went on before her. She was conscious of an aching desire, a sort of savage determination that the man should be brought back, as if by flinging her own will power into the scales the beam might be tipped. Plainly, however, Gordon was doing everything possible and although Clifford fluttered about making helpless motions, Patricia sat quietly by the tiller.

"He's breathing, Mr. Gordon!" Clifford announced excitedly, and Patricia exhaled a long breath. She had not realized how she had been holding it. Gordon, redoubling his efforts, began to work the man's arms up and down. He looked puzzled at Clifford's use of his name.

"Why, hello, Keller!" he exclaimed heartily. "I didn't recognize you in that duck hat and in the confusion. Queer coincidence, picking up one of your own men."

"Yes, and this is my sister."

Patricia laughed as she bowed with mock ceremony. "Your entrance was theatrical," she remarked. But Gordon evidently had no small talk or thought the moment inapposite. He merely smiled and once more fell to work. The patient opened his eyes suddenly and sat

up. The fresh southwest breeze was fast reviving him and he began talking in Italian, finally relapsing into broken English as he got his bearings.

*"Madre di Dios! I mose adronna. No canna swimma. Getta job drilla."*

"Surprising, isn't it?" said Gordon. "A lot of those chaps who work on the water, deckhands and so on, can't swim."

The man's teeth began to chatter. "Put this over his shoulders," and Patricia tossed him her sweater.

"Well, Guiseppe, that was a close call." Gordon's voice rang vibrantly as though he were invoking sound to hearten the man. "Have to give you a job as driller." The man understood and smiled wanly. The "bigga boss" was assuring him of a job ashore. He was alive after all. He would be a hero that evening at the boarding house. They were nearing the float and Patricia's every nerve was concentrated upon avoiding collision with the yachts which lay moored thickly in front of the clubhouse. "Now!" she exclaimed. Clifford let go the halliards and down came the mainsail. The boat gradually lost way and barely nudged the float as it touched.



“A pretty landing.” It was Gordon who had watched the maneuver interestedly. As she met his glance of commendation, Patricia realized that for the first time he had noted her as other than an automaton, so absorbed had he been in the struggle for the man’s life.

“I’ll get a machine and drive this man out to the plant. Mighty lucky for him that you two were alongside.” Then after a silence, he added meditatively, “You know he was to all intents and purposes dead. What I’d like to know is, where was he till we brought him back?” He studied Guiseppe speculatively.

Patricia shook hands cordially as he stepped ashore. They had known each other but thirty minutes but under conditions which seemed in some esoteric fashion to have created an old and tested bond.

“I don’t know whether it’s one of the superintendent’s duties to dive overboard at intervals but I think you did it with marked skill and competence,” she said with a laugh. She felt as though the episode demanded some acknowledgment.

“Certainly. That’s on page 64 of the super’s manual.” It was Clifford. “May I

come down to-morrow evening about that Trig?"

"Yes. About eight o'clock." Supporting Guiseppe who walked as yet but feebly, Gordon disappeared around the corner of the yacht club. Patricia smiled as they flapped dankly up the runway, their trousers hanging in sodden shapelessness. So close is comedy to tragedy.

"What did you mean about Trig?" inquired Patricia as they talked over the affair on the long beat home.

"He offered to coach me on it evenings. If I can get that out of the way in the fall, I'll go in clear of any conditions. Don't you think he's a very decent chap?"

"He has a good face," said Patricia.

The breeze lessened as the twilight peace descended. Patricia was stirred by the pensive beauty of the hour—the molten gold of the dying sun flooding the bay in glory, the pastel tints of the August afterglow, pink, lemon and mauve; Phantom Rock, a mirage of unearthly beauty swooning in opalescent haze; at last the rich sombre purple and indigo of the summer evening.

“Won't Mrs. Gordon find you in the way?”  
This after a long silence.

“There isn't any Mrs. Gordon. At least I haven't heard of any. He boards not far from the quarry.”

## CHAPTER IV

“OH, no, you don’t mean that, Wellington. Your bark is worse than your bite. You wouldn’t be able to give the word to fire if you ever met those conditions. I don’t mean that you’re spoofing us but I think you’re spoofing yourself. Isn’t he, Miss Keller?” And Gordon’s laugh somehow robbed the first speaker’s words of all their significance.

“Well, they ought to respect the law,” defended Wellington with an apologetic note in his voice. They had been discussing a strike in the coal fields which had led to violence. Wellington had advocated “shooting the strikers like dogs.” Patricia and he, idling along the shore road, had stopped at Gordon’s to pick up Clifford. They were sitting on the front porch. Patricia inhaled the heavy fragrance of the honeysuckle borne to them in successive waves on the soft night air and wondered with vague irritation why they discussed such jangling topics on so heavenly an evening.



"I don't believe he has the heart to kill a sparrow," she interjected lazily, and then her thoughts returned to the de Polo incident.

"Well, I guess I'm a kind of a wishy-washy sort of fellow," concluded Gordon in a quizzical drawl as he rapped the ashes out of his pipe on the porch rail. "But I'd hate like fury to give the word to shoot any of that irresponsible gang of highbinders we've got down the road. They're just a bunch of children. I never handled Italians before. They're a crowd of comedians; always have me laughing." He chuckled at some recollection.

"Keen, too," he went on, "some of them. I was asking Tony Cellini this morning about old Parsons, government inspector for this district. He knew him down on the Goat Island job. He shrugged his shoulders disgustedly—'Ol' woman, Meester Gordona,' he assured me. 'Drinka cuppa hot water every morning fore he eata.' What you might call a complete characterization! You'd laugh to see some of the funny questions that I'm called upon to settle. You see, I'm not only the bigga boss but apparently magistrate, father confessor, and physician extraordinary to the flock. Signora Pucci consulted me to-day

about medicine for her youngest's stomach-ache and last week two of them demanded that I settle a theological dispute which had been raging in one of the boarding houses about the relative potency of two saints. And I was raised a Unitarian!"

"But doesn't it interfere with discipline?" suggested Clifford. "Getting as close to them as you do?"

"That discipline idea is rather exploded you know in modern industry. We're beginning to get the idea of leading rather than driving. And besides being more human, it pays better. Men will work much harder and more happily if moved by some better motive than fear. You see, you can't say a man is this or that, pigeonhole him so easily. To a great extent you'll find in a man what you expect to find. The qualities you're looking for will respond to your attitude. I once knew a chap quite well who was a thief and swindler but although I often entrusted money to his care, he was always on the square with me."

"But it's not infallible," objected Patricia.

"No, but it works in the majority of cases. Often enough to make it a good rule to follow in industry. Men put their heart into their

work if they like and respect the boss. And there's some quality about these wops that makes them particularly responsive, an ingenuous simplicity."

"My theory is that you're that kind of manager by nature, Mr. Gordon," challenged Patricia, "a leader rather than a driver. You get good results and then proceed to elaborate a theory to fit the facts. Isn't that right?" she turned to Wellington.

"I think it's all bunk," Wellington laughed. "But the point is, Gordon gets the stone out. There's some magic in it. I suspect he's quite mistaken in his analysis, but don't disturb his dreams. It might interfere with his subconscious formula. And that works."

"Good-night, Father Gordon," she called as they drove off. "I'll come to your confession box when my sins weigh too heavily!"

"A nice fellow, isn't he?" Patricia's tone was impersonal, as they drove home.

"Yes, he is. But do you know he really believes all those theories of his—lives by them I mean?" Wellington's tone implied that he expected his listener to be incredulous.

"Yes?"

"But you don't know half of it. He's a



strange man. And he gets away with murder, even with me. I don't know how he does it. Beneath that easy-going surface there's a will of steel. I'm supposed to be his employer, you know, one of them anyway. The other day I gave him some instructions about an employment policy. Told him to fire a few men just for the sake of example, keeping the rest worried and the morale good. 'But that comes under personnel, Wellington,' he informed me, 'and by the terms of my contract I'm to have a free hand. I think your policy is mistaken, old man, and I'll have to stick to my guns. If the men go, I'll have to.' And I let him get away with it," Wellington laughed ruefully. "He was so blamed friendly and good-humored and had such an air of you-see-how-it-is old chap, that I just said, 'Oh, have it your own way,' and walked off. And yet I felt absolutely certain that if I didn't give way, he'd do as he threatened. He wasn't bluffing."

"In other words, his theory worked with you," laughed Patricia. "He looked for ready acquiescence in his viewpoint, and that was what he met. I wonder if that isn't the secret of these rare people whom one



occasionally meets and whom everyone likes. They look for the best in everyone, find it and labor under the illusion that the world is filled with people of delightful personalities and noble characters."

"I never saw one of them get anywhere."

"Where do any of us get, I wonder? Aren't we altogether too intent upon getting somewhere without first investigating the goal—deciding whether it's worth getting to?" She paused as though contemplating her own future. "I haven't much idea what it costs us to live, for example, the four of us, but I wouldn't wonder if it came to forty or fifty thousand a year. It keeps Father on the jump, I imagine. Why wouldn't we be just as happy in some pretty suburb? Or if we demand New York, in some less expensive setting? Are our lives really any richer because we spend a lot?"

"The simple life, eh? You'd soon weary of it. You've had the fleshpots too long. I was poor once; started poor. And I've no wish to experiment with it again." He spoke with bitterness.

"No, I mean comfort without the crass luxury and ostentation of New York, our

New York. It was Schwab, wasn't it, who said that to buy everything worth having, one needed no more than fifteen thousand a year?"

"Easy to say when you've Schwab's millions. I've paid a price to get as far as I've got and I'm going to keep on."

Patricia looked at him in surprise. The smothered resentment of his tone implied that she was questioning the very corner-stone of his philosophy. "You're a thorough materialist, aren't you?"

"By temperament and intellectual conviction."

"It's a pose," she affirmed. "The real materialists are sentimentalists. They hide their inherent materialism under idealistic platitudes. They prate of patriotism when they're thinking of profits—rant about loyalty while planning exploitation."

"Subtract the hypocrisy and you have me, a materialist," he asserted.

"And what am I?"

"A much more obscure problem. A man's mettle is frequently tested; his code constantly exposed both to himself and others. A woman, sheltered as you have been, doesn't know what she is. Nor does anyone else."

They fell silent. Patricia was wondering what she was. What chords vibrated to the pull of this man's strange cynical personality? And why, on the other hand, had something within her leaped to respond to the totally different philosophy implied by Gordon's utterances? Was his idealism but disguised sentimentalism? Was all idealism that? No, apparently his philosophy was empirical, sprang spontaneously out of his life.

"Why, here we are," she exclaimed as Clifford pulled up at the hotel entrance. "In time for a few dances." Wellington stepped from the tonneau and offered his arm. "No, it's too warm. Let's go down by the water." It was with the salty dampness of the sea enveloping them in its grateful coolness that she returned to the subject.

"But your interest in me is only material—physical," she protested. "You want me as a symbol of your success, to hang clothes and jewelry on and have men envy you because your wife is not altogether ugly. After that momentary satisfaction had worn off, you'd find me a bore."

"You mean you'd find me one. Damn it, Pat, you know I'm sincere. I want you. I

need you. I want you more than I want anything in the world; more than success, more than men's grudging respect. I don't attempt to analyze it. But grant me honesty. It's not vanity, not pride; it's deeper. It's an ache, a longing always with me. What I said to you the day we met sounds sophomoric now. You have ensnared me, whether deliberately or not." Impulsively he grasped her hand and sought to pull her close. But although more than once since that first involuntary surrender she had yielded him her lips, to-night she resisted.

"No, Dick," and her voice was gentle. "I don't question your sincerity. But it's the future. You do pull me, in a way. But it might not outlast the honeymoon glamour. I don't think you were intended to be a husband. I don't think you're capable of love—as I've sometimes dreamed of love. Nor, in all probability, am I. But at least I shall believe I've found the real thing when I give myself to a man. I may become the victim of an illusion but at any rate I'll be a victim wholeheartedly. There have been happy marriages, idyllically happy, with constancy to the end. I can't compromise. I'm going to



gamble everything on that cast. Look at me. I was born for love. If I can't find the jewel, I'll at least refuse paste." There was something in her voice, in her eyes, which made Wellington release her hand and draw away. He lighted a cigarette and abruptly changed the subject.

## CHAPTER V

A SEA turn lent a penetrating chill to the evening; so much so that the group had drifted inside to the billiard room. Patricia was playing Jack Ingersoll. Wellington and Madge Culver were criticizing their game with the condescension which always marks the viewpoint of those on the sidelines. Patricia characteristically was the best cue of the group.

"The squadron is in," remarked old Mr. Coburn, looking up from his paper and calling across the room. "Got into Bellport this afternoon."

"Oh, I'd love to see it! Those wonderful white ships and the jackies in those cute uniforms, and the officers so smart in white duck!" It was Madge. "I'd love to marry a naval officer. One's wedding would be so chic."

"Stevenson's formula for matrimonial bliss," remarked Ingersoll. "Marry a sea captain. 'Absence—' you know."

"The *Tadpole's* pulled out. Scraping her

for the regatta," Patricia finished with a long run and snapped the counters over with decision. "Perhaps Ned Curtiss will take us down in the *Sprite*."

"Why don't you commandeer the *Valiant*?" Wellington exhaled a cloud of smoke. "She's free to-morrow."

"Do, Pat. I was never on a tug boat in my life. They always look so brave and sturdy when they're pulling a big liner out into the stream." Madge's reaction to everything in life was suffused with feeling.

"We might go out in the afternoon." Patricia looked at Wellington questioningly. She had the American respect for "business" and its obligations.

"I'll 'phone the quarry in the morning. Can't go with you. I'll be in Boston. But Captain Tucker will go along."

"And Mr. Gordon?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "If you can induce him. I somehow can't see him doing it."

"You'll go, Jack."

"Notice, ladies and gentlemen. I'm not invited; I'm commanded. I obey! Poor old Jack Ingersoll, once a man, free and un-

fettered. Now a squire of dames, a cicisbeo." He had picked up the word in some of his desultory driftings through eighteenth century literature and delivered it with pride. A startled silence.

"Sounds like my old college yell," commented Wellington unpleasantly. "Warren's Business College, Danville, Illinois, class of ninety-nine." He was always snubbing the boy whose Harvard accent and graceful assumption of a life of unearned ease irritated him. But Ingersoll was so completely beneath Patricia's sway that he accepted Wellington and attributed his occasional rudeness to his early background.

"All right. And we'll take Ted Brainerd, too. There! I'm out." A dashing executed *massé* had finished the game.

"How unutterably romantic!" Madge peered into the quarry depths as the group skirted the edge in their path to the dock. "And all Italians, descendants of Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Giotto, Benvenuto."

"Mostly Ben's," remarked Jack Ingersoll. "He had as many children as Brigham Young."



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“And the great cranes! like wonderful trained elephants! working so faithfully day after day!”

Captain Tucker's approach interrupted her rhapsody. A shambling, white-haired giant, stoop-shouldered, his waist gone, his voice husky with whisky, Captain Tucker had for many years been in charge of the company's floating stock. His devotion to the Keller family was dog-like, and Patricia was his idol. “A faithful Newfoundland dog,” was Madge's characterization.

“Where's Mr. Gordon? I was hoping we could induce him to come too.”

“There's the parson, down by the stiff-leg. See? Way out at the end of the dock, talking to Denton, the government inspector.” He spoke with an air of affectionate pride. “Sure, he'll go if you ask him.” To him Patricia's word was law.

“You like him, don't you, Captain?”

“Miss Patricia, that boy is white—all through. I been working with him down below, living with him; with him all the time. And I just naturally like him. He's like a son to me.” The captain spoke with earnest conviction.

"But suppose he refuses? Can't you get him down in the engine room on some pretext and cast off before he realizes it?" Tucker's eyes sparkled. He loved a practical joke. It would not be the first he had played on Gordon.

Gordon looked amazed at Patricia's suggestion. "Look at me." He glanced down at his dusty clothes and engineer's boots. "The company expects me to stick to my job, not go galavanting off for a couple of hours with the summer boarders. I'm sorry."

"But I particularly wanted to ask you something." There was no coquetry in her look, merely serious purpose.

"Oh, parson," it was Captain Tucker calling, his white head protruding from the engine room like a hoary gopher's from his prairie home. "Wish you'd look at this condenser." Gordon stepped aboard and when, a couple of minutes later, he came up from the boat's bowels, thirty feet of open water lay between him and the dock. There was a certain curiosity in the glance which greeted Patricia as he joined in the laugh at his expense. She had jolted him out of his completely impersonal attitude. "I suppose that's one of her father's

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qualities," he reflected. "That refusal to accept 'No.'" But what did she want of him?

A little maneuvering on Patricia's part and they were alone. Her eyes held a dream quality as she gazed pensively over the glittering surface of the quiet sea, darkened here and there by light puffs to match the hue of her eyes. Although mid-August, here on the bay it was gratefully cool. They talked desultorily, with occasional silences. The placid deep seemed to impress its own mood of peace and calm content.

"How comfortable he is," thought Patricia. "I enjoy being silent with him." And into her consciousness came a recollection of an utterance of Maeterlinck's—something about silences and their nature, some hostile, some friendly, and how searching a test of deeply hidden, uncomprehending affinities and repulsions was silence. She had intended, perhaps, to cast a Circe-like spell over this St. Anthony in whose frank gaze she could read only simple friendliness, but Patricia's perceptions were sensitive and confronted with his sincerity she could but similarly respond.

She succeeded in extracting some information about his life. It was not, she felt, that



he was wilfully reticent but that he was himself uninterested in the subject. His father, it seemed, had been a doctor in a small city in New York and had expected him to follow the same profession.

"I should think you'd have made a wonderful doctor," she interjected. But he only shook his head.

He had lost his mother when a small child, his father during his senior year at college, and he had no brothers or sisters. From college he had gone into engineering which had led him into scientific management and efficiency work. He had had a good deal of mining experience but the Blake's Point job had been his first contact with this field. Nothing that he divulged gave her the clue she sought—what elements in the crucible of his life had developed the attitude which he seemed to her to express?

"I was thinking about what you said the other evening," she said finally. "You're a confirmed optimist, aren't you? About life, I mean."

"I don't know that I ever classified myself." He seemed to be considering himself objectively as a novel experience. "But if you



mean, do I think in the face of all the evidence to the contrary that life is worth while, I'll answer yes. Of course, one's conclusion is colored by his temperament plus circumstance."

"No, there's more to it." She shook her head. "There's a factor of intelligence, knowing what is worth wanting. You are a peculiarly happy man; your expression betrays it. And I have an idea that it's due to the different scale of values that I suspect you of having evolved."

"For example?" He looked puzzled.

"You see you're not conscious of it," she went on. "Everyone feels qualities in you that you're quite oblivious to. I don't believe you're ambitious in the American sense of ambition. You don't crave power and money. Those aspirations spring from vanity which again you lack." As the sun played about his brown hair, she noted that though in his thirties he was becoming a trifle gray.

"No, money, much of it, is a bore," he admitted. "And power is an illusion—self-defeated. You cannot control men's minds. Most multi-millionaires thought to compel the world's respect. They earned only its hatred.

I used to want them though, when I was a youngster, but one learns. I suppose that's what we're here for. There's only one path, I guess, and eventually, some time, some where, everyone follows it."

"Yes?" she hung on his words.

"I mean the merging of self into the mass. Giving, not asking."

"But it's imposs—" she stopped. Was this philosophy impossible? This man's life seemed to contradict the assertion. Did it pay? His face was the answer. "It's an old message," she said. "And beautifully simple. Is it true? I wonder."

"Here they are. Come up in the bow, you folks. The squadron is just ahead, three points off the starboard keelson." Jack exaggerated his ignorance of things nautical.

They joined the group and soon found themselves weaving among the great battleships, lying so stolidly in the calm bay as to seem set on invisible piles rather than to be afloat. It was not visiting day and they contented themselves with a swift circuit of the flotilla, then swung back toward the plant, fetching it as pools of shadow, purple, pink and amethyst merged into the tints of the

granite, began to form on the quarry floor.

"Good-bye, Captain. Good-bye, Mr. Gordon. Thank you, it was so inspiring! Those perfectly wonderful ships, lying there so patiently waiting the word to spring into action and to fly at the throat of any aggressor. And I adore the destroyers! Gaunt greyhounds coursing the green wastes. I just loved it!" It was Madge of course.

Jack fished out envelope and pencil and proffered them.

"Well?" suspiciously.

"You'll want to embalm it, won't you? 'Gaunt greyhounds coursing the green wastes'!"

As they drove home they laughed about Gordon's kidnapping.

"I think he's the darlinest thing!" affirmed Madge. "There's something so clean and good about him and yet nothing of the milk-sop. You say he's a bachelor? It's a crime! When you see the husbands we have to put up with. And Captain Tucker! What a character! I'm mad about these out-of-door men, Pat. They remind me of Jack Ingersoll—they're so different," with a withering look

at the victim. "You ought to lure them up to the hotel."

But Patricia was silent. She was wondering why she had felt so insistent a need to see this man, why she had been so resolved to get him on to the boat, and why she had insisted upon probing for his philosophy of life. Back at the hotel, she sought her room, lighted a cigarette and flung herself on the chaise longue. "I must be getting feeble-minded," she mused with an impatient jerk. "Hunting up a quarry superintendent as a spiritual adviser."

"Did you meet that new man, Gordon?" her mother inquired at dinner.

"Yes, he was on board. People seem to like him and he is nice but a bit insipid. I like a man to have more color; have a bit of devil in him."

Mrs. Keller looked pained.

"You girls don't know enough to appreciate a man when you see one. Lounge lizards are more in your line."

It was Clifford.



## CHAPTER VI

OVER the company store, a plain unpainted structure close to the water's edge, was an office shared by Gordon and Tom Little, who served as timekeeper, paymaster and purchasing agent for the store. It was here that Gordon was approached one morning by a pudgy person with an indefinable aura suggestive of political prominence in a second rate suburb.

His card read

WM. J. HUBBARD                      New England Manager  
Robertson-Talbot Co.              Contractors' Supplies

There was something in the greasy affability of his professionally cordial smile, something in the over-enthusiastic handshake which rang false.

"Just dropped in to say hello, Mr. Gordon," he announced in hearty accents, puffing the while from his climb up the stairs. "Elwell mailed in a nice order from you the other day,

I noticed. I'm not here for commercial reasons; just swinging around the circuit to keep in touch with our customers. I believe in the human contact, Mr. Gordon. There should be more of it in business; that warm human note is what lubricates the wheels of commerce; that's what I'm always telling our salesmen." He flicked his right hand as though driving home a point in a stump speech.

Gordon hid his amusement beneath an expression of interested acquiescence.

"You see, Mr. Gordon, this is an age of industry: mechanics, engineering—an automatic age, in fact. We do business by telephone, by wire, by letter, through lieutenants. The old human touch is disappearing. It's all wrong, I say." He leaned forward impressively. "That's why I spend so much time on the road: to maintain that human bond, to strengthen the link that binds the house to the customer, to let our trade know that we are no soulless corporation but a warm pulsating human entity." He mopped his brow as though the warmth of his sentiments were affecting his temperature.

Gordon waited patiently for him to get to

his point. It seemed obvious that beneath this cuttlefish camouflage there must be some motive. It was not, however, until the caller had been shown the quarry and they were back in the office that the object of his errand became clear. By this time Hubbard had reached the "old man" stage. "I tell you, old man, it's impressive, what you're doing here," and so on.

"Now about the James L. Bowker people. They must be getting about half your business. Good people, good house. I never believe in knocking a competitor but what, after all, is the point of splitting the business? It's simpler to deal with one; you get better service; it simplifies your accounts. You must be spending seven or eight thousand a month here, why not plump it?"

"You know why, Mr. Hubbard. Competition keeps prices down."

"But, I assure you," and he rambled on for some time until, lowering his voice and leaning forward confidentially, he said: "Of course, you understand that if you can see your way clear to swing all this business our way, you won't be the loser. Five per cent goes to you personally, old chap." He smiled

triumphantly as though conferring a boon for which thanks were to be expected. Gordon gazed at him in open-mouthed astonishment. So this was the object of Hubbard's call, this respectable aldermanic fellow with his prominent paunch and oily affability?

"Where did you get the idea that we did business that way?" he remarked finally. "No, Mr. Hubbard, you've made a mistake." The man stumbled out of his predicament as best he could. Lots of business done that way—one of the job's perquisites—everybody understands it—etc., etc.—the usual attempts at self-justification. As soon as he could gracefully do so, he made his departure.

That evening Gordon told Captain Tucker about the episode.

"It's strange," he added, "but only last week the Bellport baker put a similar proposition up to me. I've been buying the men's bread in Boston. Why does everyone suddenly assume that I've become a crook?"

Tucker smoked in silence for awhile, his pipe wheezing huskily. Finally he removed his feet carefully from the porch rail. "Well, parson, 'twasn't till the same thing happened to me twice that I tumbled. First 'twas up at



Bennett's spar yard at East Boston. They suggested that they bill the boom for fifty dollars more than it cost and slip me the difference; then in buying coal 'round at Hodge's a similar proposition was put up. Those things happen now and again in this business but four times in three weeks is a queer coincidence. I tell you what I figure." He lowered his voice and shook his finger impressively. "I think it's a scheme of this feller, Wellington's. He's testing us all out for some reason or other. He persuades these people to make these propositions.

"And what makes me think so is, I said to Ed Cook, Bennett's foreman, I said, 'Ed Cook, you ought to know me better than that. I've a right to punch your nose for suggesting it. I've a good mind to tell Mr. Keller and see that you never sell us another stick o' timber.' He looked pretty shamefaced and said, 'Captain,' he said, 'I know you're as square as a Dutchman's head but don't take it to heart. It didn't mean anything. I was told to do it for a reason and to keep my mouth shut. I shouldn't be spilling even this much.' So I got to figuring it out that it's a smart-Aleck scheme of Wellington's

to find out if we're all right. It don't sound to me like Mr. Keller, though of course Wellington may have persuaded him to O. K. it. I don't like it. What I mean is, a fellow that's always suspecting other people of crooked work generally has a tricky streak himself. I don't know why Mr. Keller ever tied up with Wellington and his crowd. I'm afraid he was pinched for money. I never did believe that four-eighty a ton was a safe figure on this job."

"Oh, I guess Wellington's all right," defended Gordon from the depths of a blue cloud. "Maybe he's had bad luck with men and it's made him suspicious. Though I will say, Captain, that though you're a drunken scoundrel and I suspect a devil among the women, I should think any one could see you were honest."

"Drunken scoundrel, eh?" the captain laughed. "Well, parson, that's the only thing I got against you. It don't seem right somehow. Here I been working with you two years, living with you, closer than a brother, and you and I ain't never been soused together. It don't seem friendly. It's because you were raised in the wrong part of the country. Yes,

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you'll take a drink and sometimes two, and then you quit. What is it, parson? Can't you handle it? I ain't got a word to say to a fellow that can't. I respect him for leaving it alone. But you will take two. Did you sign a two-drink pledge? Like a fellow I knew—" and Captain Tucker was off on one of his yarns of wild young days when he had more than once rounded the Horn.

"I wonder if the captain's theory is right?" Gordon reflected as he sat alone in his room later that evening. "And I wonder why this sudden attempt to rate us ethically?" It never entered his mind that these tests, if they were tests, were perhaps being applied with the idea of selecting men who were venal for a plan which demanded co-operation among such types.

With a shrug he dismissed the matter from his mind and squatted before a little bookcase which, with his trunk, comprised his Lares and Penates, and glanced over the titles for a volume with which to pass the half hour before retiring. It was a rather oddly assorted range which met his eye and one which was illuminative of their possessor. A few volumes of con-



temporaneous English fiction, H. G. Wells particularly, Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," the Webbs, Tolstoi, Romain Rolland, Bakunin, William James, Thoreau, Havelock Ellis, F. A. Lange, Hans Vaihinger, Henry Lloyd, Stanley Hall: economics, psychology and philosophy seemed to comprise their owner's chief interests.

Selecting a volume of Jean Cristophe, Gordon lost himself in its pages until a heavy body was heard creaking up the stairs. It paused for a moment outside his door and a voice called crisply, "Mr. Gordon, you go to bed or you'll hear from me. It's 'leven o'clock and if you don't get your sleep I'll have a terrible time to get you out in the morning." It was the Widow Hale, with whom he and Captain Tucker boarded. A motherly soul alone in the world, she had adopted Gordon on sight.

"All right, Mrs. Hale," he replied and in a short time he dropped off to sleep, lulled by the plaintive chirrup of the crickets which made melodious the soft, sweet-scented summer night.



## CHAPTER VII

"It's good to get back to this part of the country," exclaimed John Keller as he walked out upon the porch after breakfast. He inhaled the cool sea breeze hungrily. "It's unbearable on the Gulf Coast in summer."

Wellington had left the previous morning for New York but the two men had met in Boston and spent several hours in earnest consultation. It was a day upon which no stone was moved and the fact that Denton, the government inspector, had not appeared at the quarry excited no particular comment. His presence was required only to make certain that the weighings were accurate and honest. So far as that goes, had it been known that Denton was in Boston and had returned upon the same train as Keller, it would have had no special significance. The results of Keller's talk with his partner, however, were destined to bear immediate results.

"Well, puss, going to drive me down this morning?"

"Oh, Dad, I'm glad you're back! Of course I will." Patricia, who had been parading up and down the long veranda with him, clutched her father's arm with convulsive affection. "But finish your cigar first."

He seated himself in an inviting rocking chair with a sigh of well being, Patricia perching airily upon its arm. As she gently ran her fingers through his fast thinning hair one could almost hear him purr with contentment. From her babyhood the two had been lovers and now and again some wily aspirant had discovered that the surest road to Patricia's heart was to be solid with her father. The Kellers' marriage had been one of propinquity upon his part, policy upon hers. The glamour had hardly survived the honeymoon. But as both were blessed with good dispositions, they had adjusted themselves. Keller had become absorbed in moneymaking; his wife, with her cool temperament, had been content to let her life be smothered in bridge, clothes and the trivialities which mark the careers of those who have leisure but lack the quality of mind to utilize it profitably. It was perhaps due in part to this that John Keller's emotional life focussed so exclusively upon his daughter. As for Pa-

tricia, from her cradle she had stretched her arms out confidently to the square red face that beamed down upon her so adoringly.

"I suppose you bossed things at the quarry while I was away," he suggested jocularly as they spun through the fresh morning air.

"I was down there last Thursday," she said, deftly shifting gears as they breasted a steep pitch. And she told him about trapping Gordon on the tug.

"What do you make of him? He's been working for us nearly two years now but, as it happens, I haven't been in very close contact with him. He always seems to me an impractical kind of chap at heart but he certainly gets practical results. I mean he's impractical about his own interests. You know we pay him only five thousand plus his bonus on tonnage dumped, which adds another twenty-five hundred or so, and he's worth twice that. Yet he's never kicked. Guess if he were married his wife would jolly soon stir him up to demand more. But I suppose he salts half his pay as it is."

"Money means very little to him. I had quite a talk with him on the *Valiant*. He's very nice but a terrible stick from a girl's view-

point. He'd never know whether you were wearing a Mother Hubbard or one of Paul Poiret's triumphs. Clifford likes him tremendously. He goes down to his house three nights a week now for coaching in his Trig. I suspect he's rather unusually well educated. I mean culturally as well as in his profession. Reads a lot and all that."

"Wonder if we couldn't get him to move up to the hotel? I plan to push him ahead, you know. And I'd like to get him to feel his position more. He's so blamed democratic—overdoes it. If he were up here with us, it might make a big difference. I've other reasons too. Of course, we'd make up the increase in his expenses. Wellington thinks it would be a good idea."

"I don't think he'd like it," Patricia was silent a moment as though considering the matter. "Still, if you put it on a business basis—must have him at hand for consultation, how can he refuse? I'd rush him a bit. Get him in the car, put it up to him as a temporary arrangement, pick up his duds and land him here. Then he can't escape."

Her father looked at her reflectively.

"You're wasted, Pat, fooling away your life



around summer hotels. You're a tactician. God help the man you go after."

Gordon, however, proved unexpectedly amenable and, to Patricia's surprise, appeared at table that evening in a dinner coat of perfect fit.

"Had to get some of these comedy clothes for a friend's wedding last winter," he explained. "I was his best man. Hadn't worn 'em since my salad days."

Mrs. Keller, who had never met him before, was divided between seeking to maintain her pose of gracious patronage and her desire to hide her confusion at the fact that she had never heard the word "picaresque" which he used in jocular reference to himself. She thought at first that he was mispronouncing "picturesque." But there was something about the man's directness which could dominate even the atmosphere of the Tudor Arms and she soon capitulated to his simple cordiality. Clifford was beaming. He was seventeen years old and something about Gordon had touched his imagination. He was inclined to idealize him and Patricia derived no little pleasure from quietly poking fun at him on that score.

Very quickly they fell into the routine of Gordon's presence. The Kellers had a table which would seat six comfortably. Gordon fitted easily into Wellington's place. Patricia formed the habit of driving the two men down to work in the morning, although the Kellers' entourage that summer included a chauffeur and two cars. Keller often returned at noon, Gordon, of course, remaining all day. Three evenings weekly Gordon devoted an hour to tutoring Clifford. Most of the balance of his time was spent with Keller. The two men played billiards, spent long evenings discussing engineering problems over their cigars. Imperceptibly a genuine affection began to form. And more and more Patricia forsook the ballroom, the motor jaunts to neighboring road houses, the tête-à-têtes in secluded corners, to form the third of this odd triangle.

After years of flirtations and triumphs over rival beauties, it was refreshing to rest in the simple friendliness of this relation. Gordon, at this time, seemed to her like a brother except that there was the added stimulus of contact with a mind whose depths she had not plumbed. Gordon's mind outranged hers and her

father's but in discussions between the two men, there was in the younger one's attitude a tolerance, a reasonableness which prevented a discussion from degenerating into an argument. The transitory pleasure of defeating an opponent in an argument seemed not to appeal to him. As he once remarked to Patricia, "The trouble with so many people is that though they agree with another ninety-five per cent and disagree five per cent, all they can see is that five per cent. Arguments are so useless. You can't tell a man what he doesn't already know. Look at us, pitiful victims of circumstance, hurtling madly through space on a ball of mud, poor shipwrecked souls. How can people be other than charitable in the light of our common destiny—inscrutable, ineluctable, incomprehensible?"

They were drifting lazily before the fast falling evening breeze in the *Tadpole*. Gordon's utterance seemed to express the very spirit of the hour—serene quietude, timeless tranquillity. The man's thought seemed often to Patricia to lift her to higher levels of being, and the sensation was one of peace and rest. She found, too, that he stirred to life cells of her brain which had never "sprouted,"



as she termed it. People remarked that she seemed subdued, less hoidenish.

"What's come over you, Pat?" complained Jack Ingersoll. "You're losing your pep."

It was merely that she was adjusting herself to new vistas which contact with Gordon had opened up. Where once she had questioned the validity of the standards of the gay world she adorned, now she questioned their ethical basis. Was it right for people to devote themselves to a life of aimless pleasure-seeking in a world which, in some of her newborn moods, seemed to her to be calling for the efforts of every volunteer who could spare the time from the pressing personal duties which absorbed most people's energies?

In her relations with Gordon at this time, she was hardly conscious of herself as a woman but only as a human entity. With Wellington sex had been the overshadowing factor which colored all their contacts. With Gordon the emotional seemed dissipated before the strong illumination of the mental. She was interested to note how her own particular set reacted to this unusual man with his impracticable ideas. The girls, it seemed, thought him "nice but not interesting."



"He lacks color," asserted Helen Westcott, a Pittsburgh girl who, so Jack Ingersoll said, felt it a personal insult if a man failed to make some affectionate demonstration upon their second meeting.

"Do you know, Mr. Gordon would be good looking if he were only conscious of the fact?" Madge Culver confided one day. "But he is so lacking in—I don't know just what," she hesitated. "He's so unassertive and carries himself so impersonally, somehow, like a man pondering some abstruse astronomical problem! His looks just don't register. And he obviously hasn't the slightest taste in ties and haberdashery. Why don't you make him more clothes-conscious, Pat?"

Mrs. Keller, although she was becoming genuinely fond of their guest, felt that she ought to disapprove of him. "Mr. Gordon is such a strange man in some ways," she confided to Mrs. Grimshaw. "You'd think that George, our waiter, were an old and valued friend, and as for the chauffeur, why, I'm afraid he'll spoil him; he puts himself right on a level with servants. He doesn't realize it. It's just natural with him. But I think people should discriminate."

“Just another sign of the decadence of these days, Mrs. Keller,” and Mrs. Grimshaw gripped the copy of the *North American Review* which lay in her lap as though it were a symbol of salvation in a vale of vulgarity. “But at least his standards are not those of money and display and that is something in this materialistic age.” Mrs. Grimshaw resented the implied assumption of equality and familiarity in Mrs. Keller’s comment.

Gordon was blissfully unconscious either of approval or criticism. To Patricia he appeared to be in many respects an unsophisticated child, so oblivious did he seem of the very existence of the various competing standards which prevailed at the Tudor Arms. Mrs. Grimshaw with her blood-and-culture yardstick was quite as incomprehensible as Mrs. Keller with her more primitive measures. To him a person was neither master nor servant, intellectual nor ignorant. He was merely another human soul, to be welcomed if kindly and generous, to be borne patiently and tolerantly if otherwise. He never discussed personalities she discovered, not because of any convictions regarding it but because ideas seemed to him so much more worth talking about.

As a result of his faculty of bringing out the best in everyone he met, he was popular. Even Mrs. Grimshaw appeared to derive some benefit from contact with him and always made it a point to glance over from her adjacent table at dinner to say, "Good-evening, Mr. Gordon."

"That frozen-faced old dowager," grumbled Clifford.

## CHAPTER VIII

AUGUST's opulent splendor merged into the blue-and-gold glory of September's sunlit days. Here and there a maple flung a crimson banner to the breeze, mute symbol of surrender to autumn's advancing hosts. The shrill sibilance of the locust's note was heard no more; the gentle chirrup of crickets sounded through the twilight's dusky stillness.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in mid-September that Patricia learned the reason for Gordon's easy acquiescence in the removal to the hotel. The air held a hint of autumn, and lured by the radiant beauty of the day they had struck inland for a brisk walk over field and upland.

"I've been checking up on a quaint, ironical book," he confessed. "'The Theory of the Leisure Class,' by Veblen. This has been my first close contact with a life quite so aimless, quite so frankly devoted to pleasure only."

"And your conclusion?"



“I suppose it’s all true enough—what he says: that ostentation seems to be the dominating motive after the essentials, food, clothing and shelter are ensured. The desire to accentuate one’s superiority to the mass. But after all, you can’t generalize. I don’t suppose that the wealthy are any different at bottom from those in moderate circumstances or the poor. Their lives are certainly more futile, rather lacking in dignity, but I suppose that most people would live as the wealthy do if they could. In other words, money means man liberated, man giving material form to his vision of happiness.”

“But does he find it—happiness?”

“No, obviously not. The younger people seem happy. It doesn’t appear to last. But what an absurd setting for sociology. Look at that blue jay!” he broke off unexpectedly. “The blue of your eyes.”

“I’d as soon expect a compliment, if it is one, from Clifford.” She looked at him in surprise. “You’re not notably gallant.”

“Is it a compliment? Do you want compliments? I merely happened to observe it.”

She saw that he meant it. “What a man!

I hope you never marry. Your wife might appear in a Paquin gown looking like Helen of Troy and it would be wasted on you. You're just the same with men as with women. I don't believe you've ever kissed a woman." She spoke in a tone of semi-humorous despair.

"No, I never did." He laughed. There was neither apology nor pride in his voice. He might have been saying that he'd never been in an airplane or played squash. They were climbing a wall but Patricia stopped in mid-transit and subsided on the top. She surveyed him at first incredulously, then admiringly. "In this day and age!" she exclaimed. "You're not a man, you're a plesiosaurus or some other extinct anachronism."

"Most of my life has been spent in the wilds," he added seeing that some explanation was expected.

"Then it's not against your code, or religion, or ethics, or anything?"

He laughed again delightedly. "Bless you, no. Lack of opportunity, I fear."

A flash of deviltry lit her eyes. "Well—you've got one now, haven't you?" He was too unsophisticated to know that the warm

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kiss she bestowed full upon his lips betrayed experience; that kissing like everything else demands practice.

"Fifteen years wasted!" he exclaimed in comic regret as they walked on. "But then, that's not necessarily true. I suppose they vary greatly depending upon the parties involved. Yours was worth waiting for."

"You're progressing," she conceded. "Some girl some day will hate me for a hussy for that—for she'll ask you, you know. Oh, there's a maple with some red leaves! Autumn is here!" There was no more talk of kissing. But the overtones of the incident re-echoed through their afternoon. Patricia sparkled, ran madly after a rabbit which they surprised beneath a hedgerow, laughed gaily at her ignominious defeat in the race. Then as they sat by a quiet brook, Gordon pulling meditatively at his briar, she turned pensive.

"I love autumn. It makes me so sad." Her eyes were filled with a tender melancholy. "George Moore is deliciously sentimental about it. You've never read Moore? No. He's not your style. I'm glad. For some reason I recall a rhapsody of his about the French word *suranné*—means yester-year.



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Isn't it a beautiful word? *Suranné*," she repeated it lingeringly. "He says a sorrow clings about it. It conveys a sense of autumn, of the 'long decline of roses.' It means more to us women, those of us who have beauty. For I am beautiful." She turned to him for confirmation. He nodded, smiling amusedly at her childlike naiveté.

"But I won't be always. I am like that birch shimmering there in its gracious garments of green. But for how long? Soon it will be bare and gaunt. I am twenty-five. In a few years I will be *suranné*—warming myself by the embers of memories. Nothing can make up to a woman for the glory of those vanished years. Unless—perhaps—love, an undying love. And that is illusion, a dream cherished in so many hearts, realized in so few lives. I wonder if in any?

"Music must die, she thought, but in its dying  
Leaves wonder on soft air. Love must perish—  
And that is tragedy. The ghostly moonlight  
Is blown across the darkness and drifts away.  
Petals are blown, and the red sun drops to water."

She broke off. "I would rather marry a man I hated than to marry one I loved and



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then see that love die. For it always dies, even when they give all to love as some have done. Sacrifice position, money, honor—everything. Even then the flame finally flickers and is gone.” She was silent, her eyes misty.

“Wasn’t that good?” she queried after a moment. “Madge would have loved it! That’s what autumn does to me.”

Gordon started. “You little devil!” he exclaimed. “I thought you meant it. You were pulling at my heartstrings—as at the theatre when the violins throb softly during the pathetic passages. And you were acting.”

“I wasn’t. Was I? No. I couldn’t have been. I don’t know.” She made a gesture of helplessness and sprang to her feet.

“Let’s walk on and on,” she urged, “across the fields and through the woodlands. See how the sun bathes that elm in glimmering green radiance—that field of goldenrod and purple asters! It’s wonderful to get out this way far from the roads. I wish they’d never invented automobiles. I had no idea of the beauty of this countryside, the sweet fragrance of it.” She grasped a handful of tansy, crushed it and made him inhale it from her

pink palm. "New England is gorgeous. It has a crab-apple flavor, an intimate charm. In driving about New York I can always tell when we cross from Westchester into Connecticut."

Like two children they rambled through the golden September sunshine. To Gordon it seemed that the happiness of the scene had entered into his very fibre. He felt a sort of muted ecstasy as though the girl's kiss had tapped unsuspected emotions, warm and vibrant, which were transmuted by the serene autumnal beauty of the afternoon with its touch of melancholy into a sense of quiet and immutable well being. It was dusk, musical with the plaintive cadence of crickets and bearing in its fragrant breath the faintest foretaste of October's chill, before they glimpsed through the trees the yellow splashes which marked the hotel. Before they rounded the curve which would expose them to view, Gordon stopped suddenly.

"Kiss me again," he demanded, and sought to draw her to him. She relaxed against him. It seemed to him that their bodies were kissing. But she refused her lips.

"No," she pleaded, all her audacity melted

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into a tender, breathless appeal. "It was wonderful. More than you know perhaps. We're not ready for another—yet. I didn't know what a kiss could mean. I won't be cheap with them again—even with you."

## CHAPTER IX

THERE were no more rambles that autumn, as the next day the Kellers left for New York.

It was a relief to Gordon to return to Bellport. Autumn's advent spelled high winds, gales, factors of vital import where floating stock is concerned. He felt more at ease at Mrs. Hale's but a half mile from the quarry. His days were filled with varied duties, but often in the solitude of his room he found himself reverting to that last afternoon with Patricia. It was not the episode which so much surprised him; he was sufficiently familiar with the tone of Patricia's set to appraise it as a trifling occurrence of no particular significance. But its aftermath, the echoing overtones which reverberated so inexplicably in his memory; this phenomenon defied analysis.

Gordon was no tight-lipped ascetic. He had suggested environment as a reason for the emotional emptiness of his life up to that time and this was in fact the correct explanation. Few there are but that at some high moment



have glimpsed the eternal truth that beyond the horizon lie limitless possibilities of growth and that love will be found on the heights to which each may aspire.

Had Gordon's lines lain among attractive women, he would perhaps long before this time have known that meretricious warmth, that brassy glow which springs from those perfunctory counterfeits of love we call flirtations. This, he argued, was the reason for the haunting insistence of the image of a charming presence, blonde yet with all the vivid assertion of a flame-like brunette; firm rounded chin, full lips parted in a gay laugh, nose the faintest bit retroussé . . . the portrait shot through and vibrant with the molten glamour of gold—her hair.

Unaccustomed to introspection and annoyed by its symptoms, he sought impatiently to exorcise the vision. He had not quite lost the power "to wonder." And what is love? he pondered; this tyrannical emotion faintly imagined by millions, disclosed in its full consuming power to but few; tolerated though tacitly condemned by the world's religions, rejected as a cruel hoax by the disillusionized, springing evidently from mere blind instinct and yet

flowering so often into beauty in its most exalted manifestation, poems of supernal power, songs of deathless glory.

It seemed clear that by some mysterious alchemy the common stuff of sex was, though rarely, transmuted into the gold of love, love infinitely tender, eternally loyal, triumphant over time and circumstance. He wondered whence sprang the quiet assurance that this was truth; wondered too why he found the subject so interesting, even stimulating. That another's mind was in contact with his, sending messages through the involuntary wireless of thought, this fantastic conception never assailed him.

The work went forward briskly. Early in October he received the welcome news from New York that additional cranes and the compressor he had requested would be forthcoming. During the summer they had felt the pinch of limited capital.

"Guess the September check must have put the old man on Easy Street," remarked Captain Tucker. "Let's see—" he began figuring on the back of an envelope which lay on Gordon's desk. Denton, the government inspector, sat skimming the morning paper.

Gordon was pulling comfortably at his pipe. "Must'er come close to sixty thousand," he concluded.

Denton was a lean, little man, his head baldish, a fact he sought to disguise by a studied method of combing his hair. He glanced at Tucker sharply over the top of his paper, opened his mouth to speak but apparently reconsidering, remained silent. They fell to discussing the weather probabilities for the coming winter.

"It's going to close in early and be a hard winter," asserted the captain positively. "All the experts say so—I mean the nature sharks that study the weight of the pelts, the food laid up by the animals, the bird flights and so on. And I've never known 'em to fail. I bet we'll have to close down before Christmas. It ain't as though we had a good harbor here. I never had to handle scows in such a place."

October's flame burned with fierce and despairing passion to die suddenly, extinguished in the dull russets and browns of November's sad resignation. Early in December a northeaster began to kick up a vicious sea. One scow lay snugly sheltered by the dock; there was not room to bring the other alongside.



She lay pitching wildly some fifty yards off the end of the dock. A telephone message from Hereford, the fishing center which lay twelve miles down the coast, reported a red pennant displayed above a square red flag with a black center on the government station. At three o'clock a moderate gale, by six it had increased to sixty miles an hour, a whole gale in technical parlance. A full head of steam was kept up in the *Valiant*. As Gordon fought his way down the dock, he discovered that the wind was literally blinding. It blew his eyelashes together whenever he faced its full power. At half-past six they cast off; Captain Tucker and Gordon in the pilot house with the taciturn Swede at the wheel.

"If she ain't dragging now she will be pretty damn quick," declared Tucker, yelling to make himself heard above the drumming of the gale; "and then it will be too late to pull her out. We'd a damn sight better take a chance in the open sea. What a hell of a place to be handling scows in weather like this. There's sixty thousand dollars may be kindlin' wood in twenty minutes. By God, I believe she's dragging!" His voice rose to a wild shout.



The tug rolled and yawed, rails under. As she rounded to under the lee of the scow, it seemed as though she'd roll under. The scow was empty, a good and bad feature. It gave her more freeboard but it also offered the wind more purchase. The gale seemed to tear and wrench at her with the vindictive concentrated fury of a terrier killing a rat. Hawsers were made fast. The *Valiant* drove ahead. The lifting of the anchor synchronized with the tightening of the cables. Could the *Valiant* pull her off the lee shore, fanged with cruel teeth of granite? No one knew. There was no possible means of forecasting. Every nerve and muscle in Gordon's body was stretched as taut as the tow line. He felt as though he were pulling the scow. The Swede shifted his cud of tobacco thoughtfully and spun the spokes.

"Dirty night for sailor faller," he observed mildly. Captain Tucker burst into a roar of laughter, uncontrollable, hysterical.

"You said it, Cap'n, a hell of a damned dirty night!" he agreed vociferously. For five minutes they seemed motionless, the tremendous power of the mighty engines foiled by the gale. The propellers spun impotently. Then

mercifully the wind lessened for a moment. Using the shore lights as a gauge they saw that they were gaining.

“Py damn, I tought she’d laid down.” It was Sorenson. He was elated. The *Valiant* to him was a live thing and she had proved loyal. Gordon drew a long breath. Captain Tucker sat down suddenly, weakly. He was getting old he felt for such moments. Upon him had rested the entire responsibility of the decision.

Soon they were lost in the black gloom of the Atlantic. Twenty-four hours later they lurched drunkenly into Hereford harbor. Part of the scow’s deckhouse had been torn away. The tug’s port rail had disappeared. But no lives were lost. The damage was trifling. They pulled the scow into its winter berth and Captain Tucker and Gordon, haggard and sleepless, drove to the quarry. The paper called it the worst storm for eleven years.

Gordon called up Keller in New York and next day the men were paid off and the quarry closed down. Three days later Gordon and Tucker boarded the train for the city. The captain was slated for the Gulf Coast job;

Gordon suspected that he would be retained in New York, probably for the Long Island contract which involved dredging the Sound channel and pumping the mud inland to convert mud flats into factory sites. He wondered vaguely why when he alighted at the Grand Central he should glow at a thought which occurred to him. He was in the same city with Patricia.

## CHAPTER X

ALTHOUGH he had often passed through New York, Gordon had never before lived there. Upon breaking into the routine of his winter duties, he found the work far from confining. He was supposed to go to Flushing daily, spend a couple of hours on the job to check up its progress; the balance of his time was consumed in the Keller Company's offices on Fortieth Street just off Fifth Avenue. . . . He found the city endlessly interesting; vibrant—stimulating. A room in a Madison Avenue house served his simple requirements. At the Engineers' where he usually lunched he ran into several old friends.

“Mrs. Keller told me to be sure to bring you home to dinner to-night. If you've nothing better to do, we'll go right up from here. That suit is all right. They seldom get me into those fool clothes except when we're living at some hotel or other.” Keller was the typical American business man in his frank



admission of philosophically borne feminine domination in matters social.

As they entered the East Seventieth Street house, Gordon wondered if Patricia had instigated the invitation. He found her alone in the library, a sombre room, richly furnished, and with its leather-backed volumes, heavily upholstered chairs and table illumination giving an effect of mellow and sumptuous repose. A cynic might have reflected that the Keller family seemed to be strangely unfamiliar with the contents of their own bookshelves, but to Gordon occurred no thought of criticism on that score. He had no taint of intellectual snobbery.

"I'm so glad you could come." She gave him a warm hand clasp. "Sit there by the fire where the light won't bother you."

"How beautiful you are in that frock." He said it with simple sincerity.

Her black chiffon dinner gown, deceptively simple, with a line which bespoke a master hand, interpreted her blonde charm seductively. Bathed in the soft warm glow of the flames, she had never to Gordon seemed more radiant.

"The second compliment you ever paid me! And the first wasn't really one."

She seemed to him in this background older, more dignified, less accessible. He wondered how he could ever have claimed her lips, this alluring woman with her air of metropolitan sophistication.

"Tell me about the work. And about the scow in the storm. Captain Tucker told father he was so grateful that you were with him. It gave him moral courage, he said. Really it wasn't in the least your duty."

Gordon painted the picture in graphic strokes. "Come to think of it, it was rather a thriller, at least in contrast to this New York setting with its air of security, its complete insulation against the primal forces."

She laughed gaily at his humorous twist in describing the phlegmatic Swede's reactions. "'Dirty night for sailor faller,'" she repeated with unctiousness. "I can see him with that unshakable Scandinavian aplomb! That was one reason I told father to be sure to corral you," she added. "I wanted to hear all about it."

So it *was* Patricia, he reflected.

"I suppose you're having a wonderful winter—dances, theatres? Will you go South?"

"Time is taking its toll, I fear. It all seems to be losing its zest. I must be getting into the sere and yellow for I'm really beginning to develop almost human intelligence; reading a good bit, and much better stuff than I used to." With her daintily shod toe she stirred a stack of periodicals which lay on the table's undershelf. He saw that they were copies of a recently founded liberal weekly of some intellectual pretensions.

"And I've been going to some lectures, very illuminating to me, on sociology and economics. I'll become a blue stocking if I'm not careful! But seriously, I'm showing some faint signs of developing a social conscience. I'm questioning, probing, challenging. I won't bother you with my theories; you'll assume, justly enough, that they're merely diluted versions of the conclusions of better brains. Anyway—society bores me, philandering men making the same stale old moves; jazz, drinks, bridge, wearisome attempts at wit and repartee. So I'm

gradually pulling out of it all. I wonder that I . . .”

“Good-evening, Mr. Gordon.” Mrs. Keller, impressive and obviously expensive in her burgundy frock, swept into the room.

After dinner, a rather elaborate function, the perfection of which Mrs. Keller reflected was wasted upon their guest, they settled themselves in the drawing room, a chilling, professionally decorated interior in what Keller facetiously termed Louis Kahn's period. A half hour's desultory talk and Keller excused himself. “Have to see a man at the club,” he explained.

Patricia took the opportunity to carry Gordon off to the billiard room on the top floor. “Oh, let's not play. What a confession of empty-mindedness, all these games that people play! Surely you and I are interesting enough to each other to enjoy talking. Or . . . do I bore you?” She said it with an air of grave inquiry.

“No,” Gordon replied, speaking deliberately. “You know I like to be with you. But there is more behind it than ideas. We rest each other—and in each other.”



He stopped, surprised at his own words. There was something involuntary in his utterance, as though he were speaking from his subconscious. Patricia looked startled as she sat, strangely fragile and ethereal, in the capacious depths of a huge wing-backed chair. It was her complete recognition of the truth of his assertion which had amazed her. It puzzled her because of its possible implications. For a fantastic moment, she saw this man as her mate, her destiny irrevocably riveted to his—then with a silent laugh at her own absurdity, dismissed it. It was too incredible.

It was not Gordon's obscurity which rendered him so ineligible. Patricia was not a snob; her perceptions were keen enough and her standards high enough for her to entertain a genuine respect for his character and capacity. But he was so dissimilar to her imaginary portrait of the man who would one day compel her capitulation. The magnificent example of young America, his personality vibrant with power, his position one of conspicuous achievement, his manner charming, magnetic, irresistible; a man with the strength of a Gladstone, the charm of Sir

Philip Sidney, the poise of a Chesterfield; this ideal creation bore little resemblance to the unassuming Gordon. His attack would be swift and irresistible. He would sweep her off her feet like a Lochinvar. Millions of women finally accepted sorry compromises but Patricia, backed by beauty, brains and John Keller's money, was under no such necessity.

"To one who thinks, life is a comedy; to one who feels, a tragedy," is an aphorism the truth of which depends entirely upon the individual. Most lives are tragic and in no relation more than in that of love. No marriage colored by worldly motives was ever happy; swinishly content, perhaps, but not happy. But though the ignoble inevitably fail, the noble unfortunately do not always succeed. How many a gallant pair, following Emerson's dictum, "Give all to love," has nevertheless failed. Often more completely and disastrously than the timorous and politic bargainers with passion.

Patricia knew intuitively that her entire life hinged completely on love; denied it she would be able to salvage little from the wreckage of her dreams; granted it she could face any bludgeoning of chance with gay courage.

And others sensed this as the keynote of her nature. It was revealed in the warm fullness of her mouth, the rounded loveliness of her body; she seemed like an expanding flower awaiting the kiss of the sun god to burst into radiant bloom.

But what Patricia did not realize is that in women born for love there are two loves which must be perfectly fused, the primitive love which craves impetuous ardor and dominating mastery, and the more spiritual love which seeks tenderness, fidelity, understanding and complete sympathy. Her dream picture of her lover was suffused with the passion which sprang from the former emotion as well as by the standards derived from her environment and the romantic fiction of her girlhood.

"We rest each other, and in each other," Gordon had said.

"Yes," she replied at length after a palpitant pause. "And now that I'm becoming more serious minded I'd appreciate it most awfully if you'd talk to me about the ideas that really interest you; not talk down to me. I think you're very wise, you know." She laughed.

"'And still the wonder grew,'" quoted

Gordon. "No, I'm not very wise and I warn you beforehand that you'll get very little satisfaction from me. I've a lot of hopelessly irreconcilable data in my head, picked up from years of desultory poking about." He went on to tell her something about his conclusions.

Gordon was widely read in philosophy. But to induce him to yield up his findings was, as Patricia discovered, not easy. He had a morbid fear of appearing oracular, of the pedagogic pose, and required occasional proddings to keep him talking upon this, to her, profoundly interesting subject.

"Why, it's nearly midnight." Gordon glanced at his watch in stark amazement and sprang to his feet.

"You'll come again," she urged.

He scrutinized her to see if it were not perfunctory and, reading his thought, she said, "Next Thursday?"

"If you really want me."



## CHAPTER XI

PATRICIA had said that she was developing some signs of a social conscience. Gordon heard the story in the bus on their way down town Thursday evening. Barbara Moore, a friend of Patricia's, had run down a youngster when driving through Central Park at the speed limit. He was but slightly hurt; laid up for only a couple of weeks. Barbara, however, had felt her responsibility sufficiently to seek out the address supplied by the hospital authorities and, accompanied by Patricia, make inquiries regarding the patient's progress.

"It was incredible," Patricia asserted indignantly, "the way that family lived, packed into two filthy little dens which opened on a malodorous light well. I don't know why they keep on living. It wasn't drink, nor dope nor laziness nor anything but just circumstance. The father was a garment worker out of work on account of a lock-out; the eldest boy earned fifteen dollars a week; the mother

took in work, some kind of piece work on men's clothes; the other two children were too young to count.

"Barbara and I got busy and we've pulled them up several degrees. The father has a better job than Mr. Moore got him and they've moved into more decent quarters. The family is ignorant, yes. But no more ignorant than I am, opportunity considered. As a matter of fact, I doubt if as an economic factor I'd be worth more than twenty-five dollars a week and then only by capitalizing whatever advantages I may have as regards looks. I might be a model in a cloak and suit house. There are hundreds of thousands in this city with living standards like the Lefkowitzs'. I know that there is some basic injustice involved and I want to find out where. That's why I'm dragging you to this lecture to-night."

They found the hall near Union Square well filled. The audience was principally Jewish with a sprinkling of Irish and Italian together with a few Americans of the original Anglo-Saxon stock. Before the speakers appeared, every seat was taken and many were standing in the rear. It was a typical New York proletarian gathering. Gordon observed the faces

with intense interest. As a result of convictions arrived at from his reading he was in sympathy with their aims; as a practical executive he seriously questioned their methods. These people believed that could the profit system be destroyed and, in their sonorous phrase, "co-operative ownership and administration of the nation's means of production, distribution and exchange" assured, the millennium would be at hand. Gordon recognized the truth of their indictment: that individualism connoted stupendous waste, poverty for the majority, injustice, crime, war, disease and futile effort.

But on the other hand he felt that such a readjustment presented problems infinitely more intricate than these enthusiastic idealists comprehended; that the profit system was perhaps a remarkably ingenious automatic method of keeping the wheels turning, that the path of lasting progress involved gradual evolution; the usual liberal formula. He was in fact a liberal. Through both environment and temperament he could not be a radical.

A volley of applause greeted the first speaker who was to introduce the orator of the



evening. Speaking with a foreign accent, too marked to be disguised but not sufficiently so as to render him at all unintelligible, his words, precise, carefully selected, and musically modulated, seemed to carry added weight because of their foreign flavor.

"What gives him that air of breeding?" whispered Patricia. "And isn't he good looking?"

"He fought his way up out of the East Side," replied Gordon. "Has run for mayor several times. Is a successful lawyer and said to be worth a good deal of money."

With a graceful period he closed his remarks and into the center of the platform came lounging a striking figure. Tall, loose-jointed, old in years but not in spirit, with a face Lincolnian in its bony ruggedness, he stood surveying the applauding thousands with a smile which seemed a benediction. Salvos of applause more enthusiastic even than those which the first speaker had evoked resounded through the building. He began to speak, referred humorously to his "perpetual candidacy" for the presidency. He had represented his party many times, never of course with any expectation of success.



Then he launched into his speech. It was a proletarian appeal aimed at developing solidarity and class consciousness in his hearers, delivered with an oratorical power which amazed Patricia and her companion. They did not realize that the ablest orators in the country were to be found in this movement, that their single-hearted absorption in a forlorn hope was the dynamic which explained their extraordinary eloquence. For an hour the orator spoke, holding his audience breathless; then he swung into his peroration, beautiful in its rhythmic cadences, inspiring in its aspiration.

“All through the black night of history you have been the disinherited. On the parched plains of ancient Egypt you toiled to build pyramids to pander to the pride of the Pharaohs. In the galleys of Rome and Carthage you drowned like rats, chained to your benches. And for what? To gild the glory of Roman arms, to place a diadem in an emperor's crown. During the Dark Ages you were serfs, with brass collars riveted about your necks, bearing your master's name. Then came the harnessing of steam, the industrial and mechanical revolution. You be-

came slaves of the machine, more hopelessly, inextricably snared than ever before, for the guild worker of earlier days needed but training and his tools to enjoy some degree of freedom, while to-day the worker's value when divorced from his tools, the factory, is nothing. And the factory is worth millions and belongs to capital.

“But be not hopeless. We are the one international party, many millions strong. Seventy years ago we were an idea, to-day a powerful, closely knit, enthusiastic, world-encircling unit. The future is ours. Man is as one awakening from an age-long slumber. Eliminate the waste of individualism and there will be plenty for all. To each according to his needs; from each according to his powers. In the East at last the sun is seen, the long night of oppression, ignorance and injustice is over. Let us who are vouchsafed the vision of brotherhood dedicate our lives to this great task. Let us sink our little personalities in the work that lies before us, pledge our every last ounce of effort, our every last penny to the service of the race, and reap our reward in the knowledge that some day, probably after we ourselves have passed beyond, there

will be in all our broad country not one family hounded by the fear of poverty, not one man cringing beneath the oppressor's yoke, not one child denied fullest opportunity for education, health and happiness."

It was a rapt Patricia whom Gordon led from the hall. "Now I know how people feel who 'get religion,'" she said after a long silence. "I never before believed in greatness. I always thought it was circumstance. But that man is great, spiritually great, like one's conception of the Christ. His message is religious quite as much as economic. Not theological but religious. It was a religious exaltation which held that throng spellbound. It is the man's humility, his complete absorption in the mass, his gentleness and love which explain the devotion of his followers. I shall never be quite the same again. He has altered my conception of what a man should be, can evolve to."

Gordon looked at her curiously. He had long believed this leader to be America's greatest figure but he was surprised at Patricia's prompt and instinctive acceptance of



him. He had not thought that her perceptions were keen and true enough so to outweigh the standards of her environment.

“He is a world figure, a proletarian Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*. I once knew a man in Butte who was in close contact with him for several months. He said that the longer he knew him the more he saw, as he expressed it, divinity shining through.”

They found Keller in the library on their return, deep in a copy of one of Anna Katherine Green's novels. He read detective stories with all the ardor of a boy. They and the *National Geographic* comprised his intellectual resources.

“Oh! Oh!” he gasped as Patricia in a sudden mad mood hurled herself upon him, scattering book, cigar ashes and spectacles. “Don't do that, Pat. You're getting to be such a big girl and I'm getting along.” But he patted the bright head fondly and looked at Gordon with an expression of pride which the latter found pathetic. These two were linked so close in affection and he could plainly see were destined to drift so far apart intellectually.



As for himself, he thought as he sped downtown in the subway, never before had he felt so close a sense of comradeship with Patricia. The evening in some obscure, incalculable fashion had forged a bond.

## CHAPTER XII

DURING December Gordon was frequently in Patricia's society. Imperceptibly they formed the habit of seeing each other a couple of times weekly. Sometimes they spent the evening at home; occasionally they went to the theatre, more often to the liberal or radical rallies which to Patricia were an endless stimulus.

"To think of this surging tide of protest seething beneath the polished surface of Manhattan," she said, "and hardly one person of my acquaintance is aware of it. It makes me feel like a conspirator. I always thought that New York was bounded on the south by the Ritz, on the north by the Plaza."

One evening she demanded that he take her to a spiritualist séance on West End Avenue.

"I want to know all sides of the city's life," she declared. "I'm sure it will be a lark. The paper says that Marie, the Message Bearer, is in direct contact with the spirits of the departed and speaks purely by inspiration!"

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They found the address without difficulty, a private house the front and back parlors of which were devoted to the séance. "The friends" as Mrs. Scofield, Marie's impresario, called the audience, occupied the rear room; the front was dedicated to Marie and her invisible attendants. The medium, a handsome girl in her twenties, proceeded to deliver a wearisome rigmarole devoted chiefly to current events. This achieved, the meeting was thrown open to questions.

Up popped an old woman with wisps of gray hair hanging dankly about her ears.

"Wot was that sperrit I seen in my pantry last Wednesday afternoon?" she demanded belligerently.

Patricia grasped Gordon's sleeve convulsively and was promptly reduced to a helpless condition. Her stifled giggles proved contagious, some flappers seated behind her becoming so demoralized as to call forth a rebuke from the acidulous Mrs. Scofield. Marie supplied full information regarding the spirit in question.

It was not until after the singing of a couple of hymns, however, that the motive of the meeting was disclosed. Marie once more

taking the floor announced that "from the spirits with whom she was in contact" she had received a message for the gentleman seated in the fourth row near the end; and she indicated an elderly man who appeared to be accepting the entire affair as an undoubted manifestation of psychic forces.

"Your father is here," she announced, "and says that if you will follow his guidance you will become wealthy beyond your wildest hopes. Next week a man . . . wait . . . he is materializing before me." She paused, her eyes became glazed; she seemed to be viewing phenomena invisible to mere mortal vision. "A dark complected man with a black moustache, middle-aged, inclined to be fleshy, a man wearing a red necktie and a checked suit—this man will approach you regarding an opportunity to invest in a mine, a gold mine. Follow his advice; invest all you can—and you will become rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

Gordon fished an envelope from his pocket and penciled a message which he displayed to Patricia. "Don't fall for that stale old swindle. The man who will call will prove to be a crooked promoter."



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“So that’s it!” she gasped. “They ought to be exposed.”

Gordon shrugged his shoulders and the meeting breaking up at the moment, dropped the slip of paper in the victim’s lap as they passed. A few minutes later as they stood waiting for a taxi, he came out. As he passed he eyed Gordon closely; then turning to see that he was unobserved remarked with a grin, “Thanks for the tip but I’m from the district attorney’s office gathering evidence. I’m letting them play me for a sucker. We’ll wind up their little show shortly. But keep it dark. You’ll be amused to know that my father is still alive and kicking up in Syracuse.”

Arrived at the Kellers’, Gordon acceded to Patricia’s demand that he come in. They found Keller nodding over the Sunday paper and forbore to disturb his slumbers, finding refuge in a little upstairs sitting room in which a log fire smouldered. They talked over the evening’s events. Patricia was vastly entertained by this momentary contact with life’s seamy side. “It was like a play,” she exclaimed. “I’ll be so interested to watch the papers and see what happens.”

“Poor souls!” said Gordon reflectively. “What amazing ingenuity they waste on their poor little swindles. And despite it all they’re always broke. I sometimes think that no one can help what he does; that he is merely walking through a rôle—hypnotized—entranced. It is strange that so many people look the part they’re playing. That Mrs. Scofield. What could she be but what she is? If she were not staging Marie she’d be handling some fake cure-all or hair-grower.”

They embarked upon a theme which held for Patricia a perennial fascination, “Into this Universe and Why not knowing.”

“It is so strange,” she observed at length. “I’ve never discussed these things before though I’ve often pondered on them.” He had been explaining the theories of Plotinus. “It’s such fun to talk them over with you. You stir me up mentally. I live a great deal more inside myself now. Once it was all outside.”

He laughed at her ingenuousness. “Most of us Americans live too much outside perhaps. Extrovertive the savants call it.”

“Which reminds me, though it’s by too roundabout a route to explain, a few of us are

going up to the Culvers' summer home on the Connecticut shore for the New Year's weekend. Madge told me particularly to invite you. Mr. Wellington will be back from Chicago and she has asked him too. To be really a scientific sociologist you should put your subjects under your microscope in winter as well as in summer."

"But they're so unsatisfactory, the subjects," he explained. "You, for example. You've changed so since I first met you. I can hardly believe you're the girl whom I kissed atop a stone wall only last autumn." It was the first time he had ever referred to the episode. It was perhaps the intimacy implied by the quiet domesticity of the setting; the cheery fire, the small room, Patricia, her cheek in her palm, the warm glow of the flames touching her hair with gold, seated beside him on the davenport; Mrs. Keller safely stowed away in bed, her husband dozing in the library.

"The girl whom *you* kissed?" Patricia's gaze left the flames to encounter his with an air of amused friendliness. "Who kissed you. But it's not chivalrous of you to remind me." Then, her mood shifted, "Yes, I have changed," she said seriously. "I'm through

with all that. It's cheap—worse than cheap. It's infidelity to love . . . to the dream. I can do my part even if the man I marry hasn't done his, as of course he won't have. You'll come to Madge's party, won't you?"

"Of course. It's awfully decent of her to ask me." He spoke in a tone of grim resolution.

Patricia looked at him intently. A smile, no, just a ghost of a smile flickered for a moment about her lips. She recalled that she had remarked that Wellington would be there.

"Don't be cross about it," she suggested.

"Now why was I so boorish about that kiss?" Gordon wondered in helpless bewilderment as he rode down Fifth Avenue in a bus. As a later recollection effaced the image he smiled, for Patricia's last words had been, "Since you were so tactless as to refer to it, I will say that it was a perfectly satisfactory kiss, though now I realize that you should never have had it."



## CHAPTER XIII

“‘LONELY as God and white as a winter’s moon,’” quoted Madge, as they sat on the frozen shores of the little river adjusting their skates. Through the bare trees gleamed the lights of the Culver house. Its location, on the shore of the Sound at the mouth of the stream, was charming for August days, but now on this winter night, with the houses of neighboring estates black and forbidding in their tenantless emptiness, the little gathering felt a sense of isolation and loneliness which kept them closely grouped. It was a still evening, crisply cold, though but little snow had as yet fallen that winter; while above, like a stage property in a Belasco production, as Jack Ingersoll had remarked, swung the moon.

“One of yours?” Jack looked respectfully inquiring.

Madge eyed him suspiciously. “You could hardly be expected to know that Joaquin

Miller said it about Shasta." The two were always at swords' points yet seemed drawn together by a sort of fatal fascination. "Like dope," Jack had once explained in Madge's presence.

"Come, children, it's New Year's. Better resolve to quit these quarrels." Wellington, burly in furs, looked up from Avis Glendale's shining skates. "There!" he said with satisfaction, giving a last twist to the key before rising, "those will stay put." Hand in hand they went spinning over the smooth surface after Patricia and Gordon who were already skating upstream.

"Speaking of lonely, Pat won't be," suggested Ingersoll. "Brought two cavaliers along."

"Cavalier is a strange word for Mr. Gordon! I think Wellington has met his Waterloo, but Gordon is girl-proof. One of those impersonal men—philosophers, I suppose. But Pat didn't frame it. I asked him without prompting. I like him. He's so simple and sincere; not smart Alecky."

"You can have the last word, Madge. I'm going to take Wellington's tip."

"Don't, please—I'd miss it. And I'd al-

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ways be worried about you . . . afraid you were going into a decline!"

He laughed. "But seriously, I think you're all wrong about Gordon. He's falling hard and doesn't know it. You don't know it. Possibly Pat doesn't know it. But old Uncle John can see the signs and portents."

"Nonsense! You mean his mooning about? He's always that way. Don't you remember last summer?"

"They all fall for Pat," asserted Ingersoll stubbornly. "I suppose the man's human."

"And they say women gossip! Come along!" She held out her hand. He pulled her to her feet and they struck out.

Approaching midnight found them grouped about the great fire in the living room, their gaiety hushed by an odd sense of the significance of the passing of the old year. It was perhaps Madge, incorrigible sentimentalist, who had succeeded in infusing a note of pathos into the moment. Or was it her mother, an unabashed Victorian, who had insisted upon reading aloud Tennyson's lines,

Full knee deep lies the winter snow  
And the winter winds are wearily sighing:

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Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,  
And tread softly and speak low,  
For the old year lies a-dying.

A wind had sprung up and could be heard outside sougning plaintively through the leafless trees. Someone had extinguished the lights and although the logs flung a mellow glow upon their faces, the corners of the vast room loomed black behind them. "Let's have a story," someone suggested. "Let's all have a hand in it," amended Jack. "That will keep Madge within bounds."

Philip Greenough surreptitiously drained another glass of Scotch, knowing that Mrs. Culver had been eyeing him disapprovingly, and began,

"It was a dark and stormy night and in the echoing silences of the vast living room of the old manor, a structure once the pride of the county but now, alas, fallen into disrepair and desuetude, sat the beautiful Genevieve; her hair of molten gold glinting in the light of the flickering flames of the driftwood fire. She seemed sad, and with reason. Opposite her, sunk in a drunken slumber, slouched an old man, whose features, now ravaged by drink



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and debauchery, still bore the indefinable stamp of caste and culture. It was her father."

Greenough rambled on with a narrative reminiscent of Mrs. Radcliffe in her most lurid vein. The villain, one Gouger McGraw, abducted Genevieve. Her lover, Andrew Tabor, pursued them in his motor boat. Then he turned the story over to his neighbor, Ingersoll.

And so the tale unfolded. Wellington proved unexpectedly fertile of invention, introducing a fascinating problem tending to suggest that perchance Andy and the Gouger were, unknown to either, father and son. But Patricia would have none of this and in the following chapter easily disproved this theory. Gordon surprised them by infusing a droll note of humor in the shape of an eccentric detective whose grotesque clues and Sherlockian deductions lightened the tragic theme. Avis Glendale, during whose instalment the hour of twelve struck, given a moment's warning by the spring's release, cleverly interpolated a paragraph whereby the clock struck dramatically in the narrative. Mrs. Culver concluded it in the ninth chapter with Genevieve safe and unscathed in Andrew's arms, and her father,

cured of his bad habits, once more a prosperous stock broker.

Pamela Caldwell was voted to have contributed the cleverest chapter among the girls, Lawrence Dean among the men. The man's prize was a gold cigarette case, the girl's a beautifully chased gold penknife. Dean never smoked. Pamela was seldom without a cigarette, so they exchanged.

"How typical of this decadent age!" exclaimed Mrs. Culver in mock despair.

"After all, the story was not so much more absurd than many of the current novels," Pamela remarked. "I mean the cheaper sort where the hero longs for the wide spaces of the great silent West where a man is still a man and a woman a loyal mate—'the red-blooded type.' I wonder if people ever do the violent stunts novelists make them do? I mean for the motives they attribute to them, love, jealousy and so on. I've an idea that they don't. I don't know anyone who would. Either our crowd lacks the vitality to feel with sufficient intensity or it has more self-control."

"Howells always complained about the overstressing of love in literature," observed

Gordon. "Claimed that it played but little part in the vast majority of lives and that literature by featuring it so prominently was untrue to life."

"It has meant a lot to a good many people," protested Patricia from the depths of a vast chair next his. "Hold it!" She lighted her cigarette from his half-consumed match. "The Brownings, for example."

"Name another," Ingersoll challenged.

She was silent, thinking. "Thousands," she finally asserted. "But one doesn't hear of them. They're not in the public eye. In fact it's lack of love which pushes many people into prominence. Denied it, they seek an outlet in ambition. Conferred it, they're content to live quietly for each other."

Madge nodded her head in confirmation.

"Incorrigible sentimentalists," Ingersoll's verdict.

Someone started the phonograph, the rugs were pulled back and they were soon swinging about the room to the latest jazz record.

"The next?" signaled Wellington as he passed Gordon and Patricia, Betty Cavendish in his arms. She nodded assent.

"I had a case on him for a few weeks last



summer but he doesn't wear well. There's an unpleasant Byronic flavor to him." She looked to Gordon for confirmation.

"Oh, Wellington's all right. You girls seldom forgive a man for failing to measure up to an ideal which he never pretended to approximate. You hold him responsible for your own defects, a yearning for the unattainable." Gordon laughed as he looked down upon the blonde head. But though he spoke lightly, his arm unconsciously tightened and he clasped her for an instant with fierce intensity as though to protect her against Wellington's advances. He would never have selected Wellington for a comrade, but their relations were those of easy friendliness. They had in fact come down together in the train.

"I will say that I think I'm stronger for him than he is for me," he added, returning to the topic as they sat resting after the fox trot. "I suspect he's quite mad about you and consequently rather inclined to resent any man who sees anything of you."

"Possibly," she gazed at her fan thoughtfully for a moment. "He is attracted by me; perhaps as much as he could be by any woman.



But we interpret the word love differently. Not that I'm a prude, I hope."

"Mine, isn't it?" Someone had started the Ampico this time and Wellington had promptly appeared. Gordon, caring little for dancing, wandered into the adjacent billiard room and seating himself in a balcony shielded by a drapery lighted a cigarette and gazed out over the wintry Sound. A lighthouse marking a ledge a mile offshore flashed its steady beams through the night, its radiance diminished by the effulgence of the westering moon.

"How strangely remote, monastical, the lives of the men isolated in that lonely tower," he thought. "It must make for a philosophical serenity, such as I myself have sought to achieve in the midst of the hurly burly." Pursuing this train of thought he pondered upon exactly what it was which insulated him so effectually, for better or for worse, against life's greeds and passions. An unwonted mood. Gordon seldom indulged in introspection. He glanced at his watch; it was two o'clock. With the realization of the hour came drowsiness. He leaned back against a pillow and dozed.

He awoke with a start, aroused by a vague sense of stress near by and beneath.

"Don't! I say don't!" It was Patricia, her voice suppressed to avoid a scene, but indignant, enraged. She was struggling in Wellington's arms, her face turned aside to escape his kiss. He pinned her arms to her sides and by brute strength was forcing her to yield.

Something suddenly happened to Gordon. A sheet of flame swept him, it seemed literally, or was it an overcharged dynamo which suddenly sent its voltage through his frame? He leapt the four steps to the floor, hurled himself on Wellington; his hands found his throat . . . ah! . . . what utter satisfaction, what a sense of well being, of an urgent hunger gratified. The flesh that yielded beneath the steel-like grip of his fingers . . . it was as though a long denied joy had suddenly miraculously been vouchsafed him.

With Gordon's onslaught, Patricia had slipped from Wellington's startled grasp. Flung to the floor by the leopard-like fury of the attack he had clutched desperately, futilely, at his assailant but without effect. He was paralyzed by the suddenness, the maniacal

intensity of the assault. His extra thirty pounds were of no avail. In the dim light he did not recognize Gordon. Patricia could hardly recognize him in this uncontrolled display of brute rage, his eyes agleam with insane violence. She stood aghast as his victim seemed about to lose his senses, throttled into limp unconsciousness. She shook his shoulder wildly. It all seemed like a scene in a nightmare and Gordon's silence made it all the more ominous—inexplicable. From a neighboring room came the joyous lilt of clamorous jazz.

"Don't kill him, Douglas!" she exclaimed using his first name unwittingly. Her resentment at Wellington's caddishness had evaporated under the shock of this event.

He looked up at her uncomprehendingly. Suddenly his whole expression changed. He released his grip and rose to his feet, passing his hand vaguely across his brow.

"Did I do that?" he exclaimed incredulously as he finally took in the significance of the scene. He sank weakly into a chair. Wellington, revived by the release of the pressure on his windpipe, clambered clumsily to his feet. "Why, it's Gordon!" he gasped. "What's the idea?"



Gordon was silent . . . seeking within himself for some explanation, but to no avail.

"I give it up," he said at last. "I was dozing there behind the curtain, heard you trying to kiss Miss Keller . . . and then . . . then I turned into a tiger. It's terrible. I might have killed you . . . wanted to. I must be going crazy."

Wellington's glance rested on him suspiciously, apprehensively. He had no lack of physical courage but he had seen murder in Gordon's eyes, Gordon the gentle altruist. With trembling fingers he lighted a cigarette.

"I'm sincerely sorry," said Gordon. "I can see no justification for such an outburst though I certainly would have felt obliged to interfere under the circumstances."

"Well, I'm still alive." Wellington's attempt at jocularitas was feeble. "But if you're subject to those attacks I shall carry a gun." He walked to a mirror which hung over a console table and adjusted his tie, then brushed the dust from his clothes.

Patricia was thinking. "That was an explosion from the subconscious. Gordon lacks the key even now. How little we understand ourselves!"



"Well, what are you people up to?" Pamela Caldwell burst in upon them.

"It's never intrusion where you find three," explained Pamela as she perched upon the arm of Wellington's chair. Her companion, Greenough, whose perceptions were keener, regarded the trio curiously. He felt the strained atmosphere. A few moments later they all drifted back into the living room.

"It was Pamela who said that people never did the violent things that novelists assert they do," thought Patricia as she swept off into a fox trot with Greenough.

As they trooped up the stairs at dawn, she found a chance to say, "Well, you achieved your object though your method was perhaps a bit strenuous. Thank you, Dr. Jekyll."

Gordon could not rise to her light level. He smiled wearily but it was clear that the revelation of himself had profoundly shaken him.

## CHAPTER XIV

WHATEVER Wellington's final conclusion regarding Gordon's outburst, he had apparently made up his mind to view it as a sudden inexplicable seizure of no significance, for in their succeeding office relations no change was evident.

That he had made an implacable and relentless enemy did not occur to Gordon. He himself was at a total loss to account for it. He even forced himself to contemplate the, to him, absurd hypothesis that he was perhaps in love with Patricia. But no, love was a sentiment of tenderness and gentleness; it could hardly convert a law-abiding citizen into a potential murderer. As for Wellington's offense, he entertained no illusions about Patricia. He realized that she had no doubt often yielded her lips to him. But for some reason the thought stabbed his heart.

Patricia's only reference to the matter was to remark, with a gleam of cold fire in her blue eyes when Wellington's name was mentioned,

"I can't very well forbid the man the house considering his relations with father, but I think he realizes there'll be no more tête-à-têtes. But you had best be on your guard. He will never forgive you. I know him."

"Still it was, in a sense, complimentary," suggested Gordon.

"Not from him—you don't understand." She made a *moué* of disgust. "Don't let's discuss it. There! he's going to talk." They settled themselves to listen to the platform and principles of the Bahai cult as expounded by a Persian adherent. Patricia had spied the announcement in the paper and demanded that Gordon take her to St. Mark's-on-the-Bouwerie, the hoary old edifice, one of the few reefs to resist Manhattan's tide of progress, in which the Bahaists held their meetings.

"I'm collecting cults this winter," Patricia had announced, "and it's the most interesting hobby conceivable. In the first place, you see people in their most self-revelatory aspects; they're all impressively in earnest. In the second place, most of the cults seem to have something to say that is worth hearing. They're not all utter nonsense as I'd always assumed in my arrogant ignorance." The

truth of the matter was that inherent within Patricia was a strongly inquiring philosophic spirit which had, through her contact with Gordon, been stirred into action. She took her cults far more seriously than she permitted any but her companion to suspect. Often upon returning from a lecture they would sit talking over the ideas expounded until Gordon would with a start glance at his watch, utter an exclamation of horror, then sneak with comic furtiveness from the house.

Fearing to arouse Mrs. Keller's ire, Patricia made one or two efforts to draw him into the social whirl in which she still filled her somewhat diminishing niche. But Gordon balked so obstreperously that she relinquished her efforts; it was so clear that he found it onerous. "Too much talk; too little conversation," was his succinct verdict.

February . . . Patricia and her mother on the Seaboard Airline. In a brief note acknowledging the receipt of a book, she remarked that Palm Beach seemed more vacuous and meaningless than ever. "Gorky said that an American amusement park was the most mournful spectacle he'd ever witnessed, you once told me," she wrote. "It implies so piti-



ful a lack of inner resources. What would have been his reaction to the vulgar ostentation, the crass savagery of this place?" In a postscript she added, "I miss you."

Gordon was strangely lonely. It was the first time in his life, since in his teens he had discovered the companionship of books, that he had experienced the sensation. He developed the habit of dropping in to smoke a cigar with Keller during the evening. The big house seemed empty with Patricia's impetuous personality absent. They talked usually about business, sometimes of Clifford and the possibility of breaking him in to the Keller Construction Company upon his graduation from Harvard; never of Patricia. The contractor loved to tell about his early struggles; how he fought desperately against heavy odds; sometimes unscrupulous competitors, or again the blind forces of nature. He had battled for five years with a strong competitor who had placed spies among his force to stir up labor troubles; had practised sabotage, a form of attack to which this business is peculiarly vulnerable; and had, in one instance, not hesitated to sink a seventy-five-thousand-dollar dredge.

“But I fought fire with fire, I don’t mind telling you,” he asserted, the light of battle showing in his eyes, “and the head of that concern is to-day a broken man; working as a timekeeper for McDonald and Lynch. I finally got him through a very simple plan. I bought his business through a dummy, on a down payment, balance secured by mortgages. Then I deliberately wrecked the concern while he had to stand there with his hands tied and see the work of a lifetime go to hell. He thought at first it was a blackmail scheme and offered to buy us off at a steep advance but he’d run into something worse than blackmail. There was nothing left but a bankrupt business when I got through. It cost me \$150,000 but I made it up and a good deal more by having that competitor out of the way on the next contract I bid on. It broke old Dimmock’s heart but it was he that started it. He took to drink and McDonald keeps him on the payroll out of pity. He’s good for nothing any more.”

Gordon sat pondering the story. This too often was the price of success. It reminded him of a painting, “The Conquerors,” which used to hang in the Metropolitan—Caesar,

Napoleon, Alexander, all the world's great generals advancing, their ranks passing between piles of corpses slaughtered to lend luster to their fame. He felt that he himself was utterly incapable of such measures. He might have conceived the plan which doomed Dimmock. He could never have executed it.

Keller's face was somber as he contemplated the past. Did he feel any remorse? Gordon wondered. And then, his eyes falling upon a framed photograph of Patricia on the library table, he thought, "And it is from the swamp of such jungle struggles that the finest flower of our civilization, a beautiful, intelligent woman blooms. It is this that yields her the leisure and freedom from care which enable her to develop so spontaneously, which foster her delicate charm, which insulate her from worry and labor."

"Well, it's a case of the survival of the fittest," said Keller as though combating Gordon's silent indictment. "Let's play a game of billiards."

PART TWO  
A GIRL OF YESTERDAY





## CHAPTER XV

IT was late in March when Gordon left New York for Bellport. Patricia was lingering at Pinehurst. In response to his wire, Tony Cellini, who had remained at the quarry all winter, met him at the South Station in Boston and together they penetrated the devious labyrinths of the North End in search of labor.

“What would Paul Revere have thought?” Gordon reflected with quizzical amusement, “could he for a moment have returned to his home and surveyed the hordes of Latins who surge past his door? And yet, why not? Did not Columbus come originally from Genoa?” As always the comic element of dealing with these voluble, gesticulating, ingenuous Italians appealed to him and, though he did not realize it, his unconcealed amusement served him well in the present juncture. Men like to work for a man who has a sense of humor. The arguments regarding wages were long and loud, and the candidates appealed to high heaven, and in particular to

the Madonna, to support their assertions that never had they been insulted with so absurd an offer. It required nearly three hours of *pourparlers* to assemble a gang of approximately seventy, enough, with the nucleus of drillers, hoisting engineers and powder men which had been retained, to begin operations.

Arrived at the quarry, Gordon saw the men comfortably settled, then made a tour of inspection. As he strode down the sea-swept dock, badly battered here and there by the winter gales, he felt a sense of contentment. The keen March wind bit viciously through his heavy overcoat; the slaty sea, reflecting the dun sky of the overcast afternoon, looked savage and forbidding. With the gaunt arms of the heavy cranes outlined against the wan western light, the bleak granite walls wet with melting snows, it was a repellent picture. Yet here was his world—the field in which his vitality found expression. His winter's work, much of it office detail, seemed in retrospect futile fiddling, a woman's job.

He came to the pile to which the *Valiant*, now snugly stowed in Hereford Harbor, always tied; his thoughts reverted to that August afternoon when Patricia had en-

trapped him on the tug. How their intimacy had progressed since then! Yet as he looked back she had in that first fugitive contact established their relations upon an enduring basis. They had discussed the ancient insoluble problems, the questions which seem as unanswerable to-day as when thousands of years ago the writer of Ecclesiastes queried, "For who knowest what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?"

So vivid was his impression of the girl's personality, as he stood there in the keen salt wind it seemed that for a moment the air was faintly fragrant with the perfume of her presence; that he could feel the warmth of her vigorous young body aglow in his arms; that her voice in those sweetly throaty accents which so distinguished hers from the shrill intonation of the girls of her period, uttered the words which she had hastily scrawled as a post-script, "I miss you." A moment, transitory, englamoured, when as in a vision, an illumined glimpse, he seemed to pierce the veil which obscures each man's to-morrow and see that in the book of fate their lives were inextricably commingled, that, struggle as they might,



destiny—inexorable, inescapable—had decreed their union.

It passed. He laughed. It was unthinkable. Not that Douglas Gordon should aspire to the hand of John Keller's daughter. Gordon's contempt for mundane standards would have seemed to many arrant presumption. But that Patricia, beautiful, popular, regal in her careless acceptance of men's homage, should consider him seriously . . . that indeed was presumption. With that astounding capacity for self-deception which marks us all, he laughed away the thought.

A wave lunged heavily against the pier; the spray splashed across his face. It seemed an omen, a symbol of what awaited vaulting ambition. He thrust his hands more deeply into his pockets and laboriously climbed the hill to the men's quarters.

## CHAPTER XVI

“Now you boys better behave, I guess, what with a real live schoolma’am in the house. She’ll be down in a minute. So leave a mite o’ that apple sass, Captain Tucker.” It was Mrs. Hale’s fancy to assume a motherly tyranny over Gordon and the captain though the latter was ten years her senior. For the past week the two men had been hearing about the new schoolma’am and her reputed accomplishments.

“Went to a reg’lar college,” explained the widow, “not jest a normal school. Now what was the name of it? I declare I ain’t got no memory no longer. Miss Kimball was telling me. Her husband heard it from a feller over at Whitefield Mills. Anyway if she’s as smart as she’s pretty she ought to be principal of the Academy. And she’s so quiet appearing and refined looking. I didn’t aim to take no more boarders, but when she came to the door I jest couldn’t say no. I . . .”

The door opened to admit Phyllis Winslow.

The captain's deep bow in acknowledging the presentation was a tribute to the girl's beauty. Congenitally susceptible, one could gauge the impact of a new face upon the captain's chivalrous southern sensibilities by noting the exact angle of his bowed back as hand upon heart he bent forward. Gordon was his usual offhand, half-abstracted self, but it was clear that Mrs. Hale, for some reason, was insistent that the acquaintance progress, and she seemed to consider it an act of Providence that, as it developed, Gordon's alma mater was but a few miles from the girl's and the entente between them was traditional. The engineer was amused to discover that his recent residence in the city glorified him in the girl's eyes.

"Oh, I think New York is just wonderful!" she exclaimed with a sort of muted ecstasy, her great gray eyes bedreamed in rapt contemplation. "And to think of living there! I was there once for a week; it was in the spring vacation of my senior year and I'll never forget it. I took in everything I had time to—the Metropolitan Museum, Columbia, the Stock Exchange, and of course I went to the theatres. I'll never forget that view of the city from Brooklyn Bridge. It reminded me

of a beautiful sonnet of Wordsworth's. Remember?

“Earth has not anything to show more fair,  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty.”

“It was your Carcassonne achieved,” suggested Gordon and his voice held a note of gentleness, almost of tenderness. There was an element of pathos in this girl's life, obviously so restricted, so hampered, probably by economic pressure.

“Yes,” she replied. “You see my father is a minister in a little country town. There are five of us children and there wasn't much money for junkets.”

“It's dretful,” affirmed Mrs. Hale. “How miserable the pay is. Take our Mr. Petty, the Reverend Lemuel Petty if you please, and all we pay him is nine hundred dollars. I'm always stirring 'em up about it but all I get is the name of trouble-maker. Don't you think it's a shame, Cap'n Tucker?”

“I certainly do, ma'am,” was the prompt reply. “Outrageous. I don't know how they can get men to take up that line of work.”



"But they feel a call to it, Captain Tucker," replied Phyllis reproachfully, her manner betraying a sort of old-fashioned rustic primness which evoked a smile from Gordon. The captain remained discreetly silent. A preacher to him was a hybrid womanish product to be tolerated in theory for his services in maintaining that admirable institution, organized religion, but in practice to be avoided as the plague.

"Just the way you felt a call to the sea, Captain," Gordon prompted him good-naturedly.

Dinner completed, the captain went down to the quarry to see to the lines of his scows for though it was mid-April he affected to smell wind in the offing, while Gordon settled himself beneath the lamp in the "front parlor." Phyllis had gone to her room.

As he sat glancing idly through the local weekly paper he fell to cogitating on the diverse universes which walk about under contemporaneous hats. This Miss Winslow with her sleek brown hair precisely "done up," her discreet waists, her long skirts and conservative shoes, her Victorian culture and respect for learning; she seemed a girl of the nineties.

And yet she was younger than Patricia. . . . Patricia with her bobbed blonde hair, her unabashed pride in her gracefully modelled legs, her mad moods of noisy gaiety, her scorn for academic attainments. Patricia mirrored her time. Phyllis a vanishing era. A rustle on the stairs and she stood at the door, hesitant as though fearing to intrude. Gordon arose.

"I command you to sit in that chair, Miss Winslow," he chaffed, indicating a large, old-fashioned, black walnut stuffed chair. "It's the least uncomfortable." As she leaned her head back she appeared like a girl in some quaint old print. She had a quiet dignity of manner, a "ladylike" precision, reminiscent, one might say, of a girl from a novel by William Dean Howells. Her features, he saw, were sculptured a bit too finely, a tendency among New England women.

"Tell me about your work," he suggested as he laid down the paper. "Is it a stop-gap or does pedagogy appeal?"

"I enjoy the children, most of them. But the discipline is wearing. Still it's not unpleasant work, and since I am lacking in any particular talent, I might as well be doing it as anything else."

"The career of a pretty girl ends so soon at the altar; or begins there so soon, if you prefer, that one can't take their professional life very seriously."

"Thank you for the implication, but although of course every normal girl looks forward to marriage, the event is—what shall I say?" she smiled, "less sharply defined in her mind than it seems to be in yours."

"Most people do marry. Still, *I* haven't," he admitted.

"And I mightn't," she affirmed.

"What would you rather do if you had a choice of all the world's careers?" Gordon demanded suddenly. She was silent, thinking. The rattle of the dishes which Mrs. Hale was washing in the kitchen sounded shrilly through an opened door.

"That's a very searching question. I've never told anybody. And you'd laugh if I told you." There was an unspoken appeal in her tone.

"You know I wouldn't."

"Well, at college I used to write a little for the magazine. I'd rather write but I know I can't. I've tried and everything comes back with a rejection slip. I haven't much talent,

nor much experience, I'm afraid, as a background. I've read a good deal but haven't lived very much. And I just couldn't write the kind of thing they seem to want nowadays anyway; such . . ." she hesitated, "such frank things." She looked at him as though demanding his sympathy.

"Yes, they rather overdo it, don't they? I imagine it's done cold-bloodedly, to ensure sales."

"I sometimes think there ought to be a censorship. Some of the girls at college got to be so outrageous in their speech. Though of course one can choose one's companions. I was in a different crowd, the Christian Association. Coming from a minister's family it was rather expected of me. Several of my friends have gone into settlement houses or social work, but I don't like to get a living from philanthropic activities. One suspects one's own motives."

"A good many don't who ought to," suggested Gordon with a laugh. "But I can see your viewpoint."

They fell to discussing economics, or rather Gordon told her something about the subject as he discovered that she knew little about it



and that little was of the carefully dehydrated college brand. He soon dropped it to shift to literature with which they succeeded better, but Mrs. Hale's entrance reduced the plane of talk to a more concrete level. The clock striking eleven, the two women mounted the creaking old staircase.

As Gordon sat for a few moments over his unread paper at the open window, his mood one of quiet contemplation, soothed by the tranquil beauty of the April evening, it was not upon his companion of the past few hours that his thoughts rested. It was not the calm accents of Phyllis's voice which re-echoed in the chambers of his memory, not the picture of her cool gray eyes which flashed before his inner vision. Southward sped his errant fancy to a girl who had written, "I miss you," to eyes of deepest sapphire in whose depths glowed a latent fire awaiting but the one predestined reciprocal spark to flame into that undying blaze which men call love.

## CHAPTER XVII

To Gordon there was something of pathos in Phyllis Winslow's position. She had had so few really good times. At college she had "worked her way" through tutoring, serving as local newspaper correspondent and so on. Now that she was earning something more than a bare living, her surplus went back to the family to help the younger children secure their educational opportunities. And so at twenty-three at a time when more happily situated girls are absorbed in a pagan rout of dances, flirtations, football games and out-of-door sports her vitality was expended in injecting the three R's into a roomful of youngsters whose chief object in life seemed to be to reject the proffered dose of learning. It was from motives of purest altruism that he began to seek to bring some brightness into her drab life. He had bought an automobile in Boston, and suggested, one Saturday, that they take a run up the coast the following day.

It was a Sunday in early May. Mrs. Hale

put them up a picnic lunch and after breakfast they started. The air was sweet with the scent of apple blossoms; the sea was blue with the celestial tint which mirrors a spring sky; and all the countryside was palpitant with that thrilling ecstasy which marks spring in New England. Phyllis herself in a pretty new gingham frock, the cheapness of which was not apparent to Gordon's masculine perception, seemed the very spirit of spring incarnate. Her eyes shone like stars and once as they halted on a headland to absorb the beauty of sky, sea and blooming orchard, he surprised them wet with tears.

"It's because I'm so happy," she confessed shamefacedly. "The beauty of it all. It stirs me so."

A wave of tenderness swept him and he felt grateful that he had been instrumental in giving her pleasure. As they drove through quaint old Derryport, this product of generations of Puritanic repression gasped with delight. And in the May morning with the sunlight filtering through the ancient elms and tracing charming patterns on the façades of the stately colonial mansions, the scene seemed

as though it must have been carefully staged, so satisfying was its beauty.

She turned to him, cheeks flushed with happiness, and clutched his arm. "You're giving me *such* a good time!" she exclaimed.

It was on a sandy beach on the New Hampshire shore that with appetites whetted by the keen sea breeze they pulled up for lunch. Far down the strand a group of tiny black dots marked another party. Otherwise they were alone. Only the gulls swooped gracefully over the plunging surf, screaming raucously at intervals. And occasionally a sand peep hopped discreetly past, hoping for crumbs from their lunch basket. They ate with the gusto of children, a vacuum bottle supplying gratefully hot coffee.

As Gordon lighted his pipe he reached absently in his pocket for the box of cigarettes he always carried in deference to Patricia's needs. As he checked himself, he smiled. Phyllis would have been so grievously insulted.

"Why are you smiling?" she asked.

Not willing to be misunderstood, he told her about Patricia.



"Is she very beautiful?" she inquired wistfully. "But then she'd make you think so anyway. Those society girls simply plaster on the rouge. And probably her hair is touched up and of course she uses a lip stick and eyebrow pencil."

"Meow!" he laughed. "Every count in the indictment is true and she'd be the last to deny it. She's brazen about it."

"Such girls don't wear well," she affirmed, lips compressed. "They make charming sweethearts but unsatisfactory wives and mothers."

Patricia a mother! There was something incongruous in the conception. He turned it over in his mind. It seemed a shame to hamper that gaily soaring spirit with a brood of youngsters. Now Phyllis—why, yes. One visualized her as a born mother, bringing up a family with firm competence and a strong sense of a duty fulfilled. Totally lacking in that masculine egotism which finds expression in a desire for children to whom to transmit one's precious characteristics, Gordon felt a faint sense of distaste at the thought of child-bearing. It seemed so physical, almost indelicate. Why must a moment often of such

ecstatic splendor as to transmute what to dolts can be ever but physical into an experience spiritual in its significance, why must it result thus? Why could not children be materialized out of space?

"Have you a photograph of her?" Her query awakened him from his reverie.

"Why no," he replied. He had never asked for one. "But I dare say she'll be down this summer, though no one can forecast her whereabouts." Seeing her hostility which cast a shadow over the bright hour, he changed the subject.

"Do you know Matthew Arnold's lines on Dover Sands?" he asked.

She recited a few lines. "And do you know," she added, "that Longfellow wrote a few really beautiful sonnets? Listen to his Milton tribute; it's appropriate to the place.

"I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold

How the voluminous billows roll and run,

Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun

Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,

And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold

All its loose-flowing garments into one,

Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun

Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.

## 166 PATRICIA'S AWAKENING

So in majestic cadence rise and fall

The mighty undulations of thy song,

O sightless bard, England's Mæonides!

And ever and anon, high over all

Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,

Floods all the soul with its melodious seas."

Gordon, who had been lying on his back, sat bolt upright. "Did Longfellow write that?" he exclaimed incredulously. "The man who wrote the Village Blacksmith? Please do repeat it." She acquiesced, enjoying his astonishment.

"What a simply gorgeous thing; a masterpiece! And nowadays we all smile tolerantly when his name is mentioned."

The hours sped quickly in the beauty of the spring day and it was with surprise that Gordon noted the time, four o'clock. "How the day has flown," he said.

"Hasn't it?" she echoed. "I've loved it."

It was a long drive home through the deepening twilight which as Phyllis remarked seemed inappropriate to the season.

"Spring," she asserted, "is a morning season; autumn for long lingering afternoons and twilight." She relapsed into a contented silence and for miles they exchanged not a

word. "Don't ask me to talk," she explained. "I'm just being happy."

"Well, you folks had grand weather, didn't ye?" observed Mrs. Hale as they entered and she scanned Phyllis's face shrewdly. She had confided to Mrs. Toppan next door that she thought it a shame that a fine man like Mr. Gordon should be living a lonely life as a bachelor with so many sweet girls about sighing for a chance to make some good man a nice home.



## CHAPTER XVIII

“JUST what do you make of that man, McConnville?” Captain Tucker indicated the departing figure with a wave of his pipe, a heavily set, poker-faced, middle-aged man. Gordon and the captain were seated in the former’s office whence the new timekeeper, now under discussion, had just gone to check up the noon time. Four times daily he made the rounds with his little leather-bound book.

“Make of him?” queried Gordon. “Why, he’s all right, I guess. When Tom quit a couple of weeks ago he slipped this chap in here to replace him; said he was a friend of his. I looked him over; he seemed efficient with a quiet competent manner so I took him on. His references were all right. How does he strike you?”

“Seems a good scout. I haven’t a word against him. But what I couldn’t figure out was why such an apparently able man should be working for a hundred a month as a time-

keeper. Seemed sort of queer. Where did Tom know him?"

"He's been rooming up at Olson's where Tom was located. Tom got a good offer from his brother who runs a garage in New Jersey. That's how he happened to quit. But this fellow is all right. In fact, he worked for the government for some years. In the lighthouse service. I don't know what he was doing down here. He hasn't a great deal to say for himself."

"That's just it. He sees everything and says nothing. I can't quite make him out." Captain Tucker's eyes half closed as he pondered. "I stopped in here the other day and blamed if he hadn't got all the duplicate records of last summer's tonnage out of the desk. That ain't his end of the work."

"Well, I suppose he was going through everything to get thoroughly posted," Gordon suggested. He suspected the captain of a constitutional love of mystery and melodrama.

"Yes, that sounds reasonable," replied Captain Tucker with a judicial air. "I wouldn't a given it a second thought if it hadn't been for a strange coincidence, a very strange coincidence, a remarkable coincidence." He spoke

impressively. Gordon waited. He knew the captain's pleasure in leading up to his climaxes by devious routes.

"It was down on the Gulf job this winter. The super's office is in the back of the company store down there and the storekeeper who is really an independent merchant, paying the company a percentage on his volume, shares the office. It was some time in February that Lynch, the feller who had the store concession, sold out to another man, a stranger from the north named Baxter. The company had no objection so long as the new man was O. K. and had a good reputation. Some way or another they turned the job over to me of checking his references. I wrote our New York office and word came back that he was a hundred per cent. Among other references was that of the U. S. Government for whom he had worked for some years in the coast survey." The captain paused to refill his pipe. "Begin to see anything?" he finally asked.

Gordon shook his head.

"An ex-government man buys the store concession at one of our contracts; another becomes a timekeeper here. I confess I can't



see any significance in it. We have a lot of ex-government men. You, for instance. You were in the engineer's department for six years. It's natural. Waterside men generally stick to the shore in some capacity or another."

"Only this—Baxter didn't know enough about merchandising to weigh out a pound o' tea. He had to depend entirely upon his clerk though of course he soon picked it up. Now I think it's queer that . . ." A long blast of the tug's whistle broke up the conversation. Captain Tucker hastened down to the dock to supervise the landing of the scow, and Gordon turned to some work in hand, smiling as he contemplated the talk. Captain Tucker took a childish pleasure in letting his imagination run riot and in creating plots and counter-plots from the most innocent premises. This he concluded was merely another instance.

Captain Tucker's fancies made so little impression upon Gordon that he had completely forgotten them by the following evening when, sitting upon the rocks by the shore in the starlight with Phyllis, she commented upon her reactions to the older man.



"He seems jolly," she remarked but with palpable reservations.

"But," suggested her companion.

"I can't see how you see so much in him. He's inclined to be coarse and I've heard that he sometimes drinks."

Gordon laughed heartily. "He sure does. And often gets drunk. But that's a peccadillo in a seafaring man."

She regarded him searchingly in the dim light, seeking to read his meaning. So often his banter troubled her. She never knew when to take him seriously. Concluding that he meant it, she replied with a deliciously prim air, "I wouldn't call it a peccadillo. It's a horrid trait."

"Oh, come now. The captain is all right. He has a heart of gold and I don't know of anyone of whom I'm fonder. He's true blue. Let him get drunk now and then. Lots of people would be improved, both in character and disposition, if only they would occasionally get drunk. It's an outlet, a release for suppressed impulses."

"Now you *are* making game of me," she exclaimed in triumph. "And further I don't believe you believe half you claim to regarding

all that psycho-analysis you talk about." Gordon had been scanning a recent volume on the subject and though his relayed interpretation of Freudian theories had been carefully expurgated the girl felt vaguely a taint of the indiscreet in the topic. Phyllis had so many taboos about conversation that Gordon, fresh from the happy-go-lucky atmosphere of Patricia's set where anything was permissible provided one were entertaining, found it difficult to keep them in mind.

What would Phyllis have been if brought up in Patricia's environment? was a hypothesis upon which at times he found himself speculating. As to the reverse, the problem was simple. New York was full of vigorous, untrammelled girls who had cut the Gordian knot of an uncongenial provincial environment through the easy solution of a railroad ticket. But how much of Phyllis was Phyllis, and how much Phyllis's background? How many of her reticences were conventional; how many "acquired characteristics," an inherited overlading through generations of suppressing the natural instincts?

"Well, anyway, to revert to Captain Tucker. Admitting that drunkenness is ob-

jectionable, in his case it's a defect of a quality. It's his sense of good fellowship, his necessity for warm human contacts that explains it."

"Did he ever try to stop? Don't they have cures?" she inquired.

"Heaven forbid! Don't rob the captain of that resource. Really you know he doesn't drink enough to harm. I mean he's never drunk when it would inconvenience anyone, interfere with his work or cause any trouble. It is his boast that he can take it or leave it."

She shook her head. "It's horrid," she repeated. "I'm glad *you* don't drink." And with a little sigh as though gladly dismissing a disagreeable subject to substitute its opposite, she added, "As though you could. It's preposterous! But I think you're too broad-minded. It's because you're so good. You have the tolerance of the untempted. Often a person condemns most bitterly the vice towards which he feels drawn. Not that I have a craving for alcohol," she laughed and settled comfortably against a block of granite which served as a back rest.

Beneath them swinging heavily in rhythmic cadence sounded the slow resurgence of the sea. Imperceptibly their moods responded.



They sat silent for awhile, for the time lifted above life with its insistent clamor. Desire, ambition, even that impersonal vitality which finds satisfaction in work well executed seemed to Gordon to be nullified by the tranquil serenity of the time and place. Phyllis, he felt, was sharing his mood. She was, he knew, sensitive to beauty, particularly if it were of an obvious type. Both ethically and aesthetically she was conventional, a conformist.

“I do so love it down here at Bellport. I think I’ve never been so happy. I love the sea and have always longed for it. And though my position doesn’t pay very well I enjoy being in a small school where the organization is not inflexible. The session ends in a few weeks and I’ll go home for a visit, but I’ll return to Mrs. Hale’s for the summer. You’ve been so kind to me; that’s one reason, perhaps, why I like it here.” She had a curiously direct way of acknowledging attention which embarrassed Gordon.

“You mean you’ve been kind in lightening what would otherwise have been a dull time for me,” he protested. Then they drifted, appropriately enough perhaps considering the setting, to talking of love, love in the abstract.



Phyllis's ideal was romantic to the point, it impressed Gordon, of sentimentalism.

"Love is a mating of minds," she declared. "The novelists of to-day are so offensive. They reduce love to such fleshly levels. But that kind of love is transitory. A great love should be above such considerations. Minds can remain forever young but beauty fades and passion's bright flame soon flickers out."

Gordon had thought little about love until comparatively recently, but he felt nevertheless that her conception was immature—school girlish. As she abruptly changed the subject, however, feeling that the topic was hardly decorous, he was spared the necessity of committing himself to an expression of opinion.

They returned to the house as the clock struck ten. He reflected that there was really little upon which they were *en rapport* and he wondered why he enjoyed being with her. It was, of course, because he had a sense of giving her pleasure and this knowledge was sufficient recompense. He was almost her sole resource. Recognizing this he gave of himself freely.

## CHAPTER XIX

"I do think I ought to be able to write that kind of thing." Phyllis passed a Boston evening paper to Gordon.

"The Bedtime Tale," he read aloud.

Ripple Beaver hadn't been in earnest when she threatened to call the dogs for she had no one to send for them. The eggs in the Ducks' Oak had hatched long ago and Daddy Greencrest and Mammy Gaywing had taken their flock on their summer pilgrimage. Whisk Whippoorwill hadn't come back; not because the hawk had caught him, but because he felt the Secret Pond was a better place to raise his chicks as long as the king was at Chips Beaver's Pond—especially if you rested on the ground.

"Of course you could," he agreed. "Why don't you?"

The night had turned chill and foggy and they were reading beneath Mrs. Hale's ornate parlor lamp.

"I wouldn't know how to sell it, or how much to ask or anything. How little one

learns at college that is of any practical value.”

“Well, it just happens that I’m posted on this field. I met an old friend of college days in New York last winter who syndicates daily features to newspapers and he told me how the thing was done. He couldn’t very well handle another feature like this as he already has one but there’s no reason why you shouldn’t sell it direct.” He went on to explain the *modus operandi* which consisted merely in mailing a letter, order blank and sheet containing sample installments to a list of newspapers. “You charge according to circulation,” he explained, “from, say, five to ten dollars weekly. A book called *Ayer’s Annual* gives the name of every publication in the country. There are perhaps five hundred dailies large enough to be worth covering. You should have a New York address, but I know that Mr. Keller would have no objection to your using that of his office; and the mail could be forwarded here. You might easily sell a half-dozen papers, perhaps more, and that would mean forty or fifty dollars a week.”

“A good deal more than I earn now,” exclaimed Phyllis her eyes shining, “and goodness knows I need it. I could easily write

them evenings and make carbon copies on my typewriter. Oh, do you suppose I could do it? I'm going up to my room right now to see whether I can or not," and she rushed upstairs impetuously to return an hour later with three daily installments of "Twilight Tales."

"Great!" was Gordon's verdict, "and now I'll get busy on the executive end. Write seven more, I'll have the ten installments printed at the same time I have the letter heads, envelopes and order blanks done. And to-morrow I'll 'phone Boston for an Ayer's Annual. Then we'll have to write the letter to accompany the samples, have it multi-graphed and filled in. All that remains is to mail them. Think of the thrill of mailing five hundred letters and then awaiting the returns! It beats roulette or horse-racing. And by doing it yourself you get all there is in it. A regular bureau would assume all expense, to be sure, but would give you as author only half the gross revenue."

"What will the expense be? I forgot about that." Phyllis's face fell.

"Sixty or seventy dollars will easily cover it and I demand as accessory after the fact the



privilege of advancing it." Despite the girl's protests thus it was arranged.

Nearly two weeks passed before details were finished and everything was assembled for the cast of the die, two weeks in which Phyllis's moods ranged from the heights to the depths. Sometimes she felt certain that doubtless every newspaper which was a prospect had already been sold a competing service; in other moods, it seemed certain that at least twenty out of five hundred would order.

"If you sell one out of a hundred you'll do well," Gordon told her. "The mail merely picks out the easy ones and there aren't many of those. In about three months you should launch a follow-up-campaign."

Two busy evenings were passed folding and inserting; the signing of the letters had been done by the multigrapher. Mrs. Hale who kept in closest touch with proceedings declared that she was "all of a flutter."

"What a lot of letters five hundred are!" exclaimed Phyllis as at last they were tied into neat bundles ready for transport to the post office in Gordon's machine. She picked one out at random and opened it to make sure that

all was in order. First the broadside upon which was printed the sample stories; then the letter explaining the proposition, quoting rates, and finally the order blank. Each envelope was addressed "Managing Editor" as they knew of no way to secure the names.

"Gorry mighty but you're writin' a lot of letters, Miss Winslow," was the verdict of Mr. Ellicott, the local postmaster, his chin whiskers wagging agitatedly as he opened the wicket of his window to receive them. He was distinctly aggrieved that she vouchsafed no explanation.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he opened one to find out what it's all about. How *can* you be so calm, Douglas Gordon?" she demanded. "I've never been so excited in all my life. Just picture it on the map. Five hundred separate strands all diverging from this little spot and extending all over the United States. Each letter knocks at a door. In some places a voice says, 'How do you do? Come in,' and in others there's a gruff, 'Go away, I'm busy.' I do hope there isn't a train wreck. My poor little letters! They're so frail to be traveling so far and asking for money. Now," as they

drew up before the house, "I must go in and correct examination papers. What a dull task for one in my frame of mind!"

Gordon was less calm than he appeared. He realized that though the financial investment was trivial a vast deal depended upon the success of the idea. If successful, it would probably lift Phyllis out of the dull routine of school work, for she might easily conduct a half dozen daily features. If it failed. . . . "Well, it won't fail," he affirmed. "It can't fail."

They had mailed the letters Monday, figuring that in the majority of instances they would thus avoid the danger of arriving in the heavy Monday morning mail. As replies would have to be forwarded from the New York address they expected no returns that week. Nor were they disappointed. They were seated at lunch Tuesday of the succeeding week when the telephone rang.

"It's for Miss Winslow," Mrs. Hale reported. Phyllis went to the instrument.

"Hereford, Western Union talking," came a voice over the wire. "Message for Miss Winslow from New York. All ready?"

"Yes."



"Cleveland *Press* and Buffalo *Times* wire acceptance 'Twilight Tales' service. Breen."

"Oh, goody!" Slamming down the receiver she tore into the dining room with her message.

"First blood, eh? They must have wanted it badly; hence the wire instead of the mail." Gordon was quite as elated as Phyllis though less demonstrative. Thursday brought two more orders by mail; Saturday another and the following week three more. Thus Phyllis found herself earning some sixty dollars weekly in addition to her salary.

"And a follow-up campaign, you say, will probably add three or four more? Oh, isn't it simply wonderful? Nor is there any reason that I can see why they shouldn't buy the service for years. I owe it all to you. I wouldn't have had the least idea how to go about it. You ought to have half of all I earn from it. I insist."

But Gordon laughed off her proposal. "My reward is the glory of having launched Phyllis Winslow on a glittering career," he said. "'I knew her when'—that is what I can say. For it is quite clear to me that you are destined for literature rather than pedagogy,



and New York is already extending its tentacles."

"I shall never, never forget what you've done!" exclaimed Phyllis earnestly. With a delicious air of a woman of affairs she gathered her papers together preparatory to climbing up to her room, in the hushed precincts of which she labored over her "Twilight Tales."

## CHAPTER XX

“PARSON, you don’t look right peart. You might a’ seen a ghost. Better have a drink.” Captain Tucker had just entered the office.

“You’re the doctor, Captain. Whatever you prescribe.” As the older man poured out two fingers of Scotch, Gordon slipped an opened letter into his pocket. Received at Mrs. Hale’s, he had not read it until arriving at the quarry. Filling the glass to the brim he downed it.

“You’re liberal enough all right, once you make up your mind to it,” and the Captain downed a duplicate. “I swear I believe that’s the first he-drink I ever see you take.”

A yell from outside and the two men hastened down into the quarry. A stray piece of dynamite exploded by contact with a pick had frightened a pick and shovel crew. It was not until noon that in the quiet of his room, Gordon had the opportunity to re-read his letter, the erratic impetuous chirography of which betrayed it as Patricia’s.

Dated at Southampton it dealt briefly with her movements during the spring—and then . . . “I know you’ll wish me happiness in my engagement which this time is a really, truly one. I met him at Palm Beach and I know you’d approve, which means a lot to me, though of course you don’t believe it. He is a New York man, Allen Beaudry, of Beaudry and Company, an old financial house; a Yale man, thirty-four years old. Not a bit the orthodox country club, golfing, hunting type, but with a fine mind and a social conscience. Don’t think that because I met him at Palm Beach he’s that sort of person. Here’s a snapshot of both of us, but as Dad has taken a suite at the Tudor Arms for July and August and he’ll be down you’ll be sure to meet him.”

Beaudry, Gordon concluded from the photograph, was decidedly good looking with a certain seriousness approaching severity unusual in a man of his years. “He has character,” he reflected, “but I should think that Patricia’s madcap moods would disturb him. I see no trace of humor.” And then he sat for a long time, apparently scanning a Landseer steel engraving which hung on his wall, Mrs. Hale’s conception of decoration. He was

seeking to adjust himself to a situation which so far as he had ever consciously confessed required no particular adjustment. Why should the impact of the news have temporarily stunned him? Why did he now feel an inexplicable sense of utter abandonment, of desolating loneliness? Why did his work as he contemplated returning to the quarry suddenly seem the very essence of futility; a tiresomely perfunctory performance to be executed not for the satisfaction of self-expression but for a mere monthly salary check?

He was getting stale . . . that was it. In the fall he'd resign and secure a position in some manufacturing plant installing the Taylor system; or better still he'd go to England or the continent. There was a crying need in Europe for men of his training. At length he arose, walked heavily down the stairs and drove the half mile to the quarry to lose himself for a couple of hours in the problem presented by a balky traveling crane.

“To-day school ended and to-morrow I'll go home for a couple of weeks. I'll be quite a heroine to my younger sisters with my work appearing in print, even if it's only 'Twilight



Tales.' And to think I never have to go back to a schoolroom unless I want to. I feel as though I'd inherited a million dollars."

It was evening and they were driving at Gordon's suggestion to a beach resort which with its dance halls, bowling alleys and merry-go-rounds supplied amusement in its crudest form for Hereford's masses.

"I'm so happy," Phyllis went on. "I wish you were. You seem so subdued to-night. You never take a vacation, do you? That is the trouble." Her voice held a note of maternal concern.

"No, it's just that I need a change," and he told her of his nebulous plans for going to Europe in the fall. "You don't approve, I see," this after she had received his remarks in silence.

"I can't imagine what suddenly put such an idea in your head. No, I don't see any point to your wandering about the globe so aimlessly. If it's stimulus you need you won't find it that way. I remember Emerson said something about the futility of traveling for any such purpose; said traveling was a fool's paradise; that we owe to our first journeys the discovery that place is nothing. Don't you re-

call that passage? He went to Naples and there beside him was the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that he fled from?" She turned and faced him suddenly. "It's something to do with that Patricia Keller," she accused with the unerring intuition of her sex. "You heard from her this morning. I saw the letter by your plate."

"What has Patricia Keller to do with my actions?" demanded Gordon, vexed at her perspicacity. "How absurd! She did write me and remarked among other items that she was engaged to be married. Well, that's interesting but of no particular import to me."

Phyllis immediately changed the subject and soon had him interested in her plans for adding more features to her list. "I could easily write three or four more," she explained. "The question is, on what subjects?"

They soon wearied of the clamor and garish glitter of Halcyon Haven, which was the resort's mellifluous title, and drove down the shore through the darkness of the June evening odorous with bayberry and wild roses.

"Let's get out and sit on the beach," she suggested. "It's a heavenly night." Close to the edge of the surf which boiled and hissed

in the starlight Gordon spread a rug from the machine. Perhaps it was the sense of independence engendered by the success of her feature; perhaps the knowledge of Patricia's engagement; perhaps an intuitive sense that a man's love thus repelled, and Phyllis believed Gordon to be in love with Patricia, often seeks another channel of expression; perhaps the spell of the hour and place or what is more likely, the urgent insistence of the needs of her nature—the eternal woman beneath the personality of Phyllis Winslow; whatever the reason she found herself nestling close to her companion.

A mood of reckless abandonment swept over Gordon. He knew that to Phyllis a kiss was of far greater significance than to the girls of Patricia's frivolous group but he felt strangely passive as though something had deleted his will, blinded him to consequences. His arm encircled her; his lips found hers.

"Oh," she exclaimed breathlessly, "I love you!" As her arms went about his neck she was for the moment an almost totally different individual from the Phyllis Winslow she or anyone else had ever known. It was her first kiss. Upon Gordon was lavished that flood of



feeling which is released when the dam gives way and a repressed nature abandons itself utterly to its emotional dynamic. Nor was Gordon unshaken.

It was past midnight when they arrived home. Mrs. Hale had long been asleep.

"And I have to leave on the eight o'clock train in the morning," said Phyllis, her voice almost a whisper to avoid waking the old lady. "I must go right to bed." But it was another hour before they could bear to say their final good night. Strangely Gordon promptly fell into a dreamless sleep.

Nor did morning which dawned blithely bring disillusionment. "Oh, how beautiful you are!" he exclaimed as Phyllis, hatted and veiled, smart in her modish traveling suit, entered the dining room.

"Sh!" she raised a warning finger. Mrs. Hale was just entering from the kitchen. But her happiness was so manifest, she seemed so triumphantly radiant that the older woman's glance rested on her with shrewd suspicion.

"I declare I never seen you so scrumptious," she affirmed. "You must be terrible fond of your folks. 'Tain't very complimentary to



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me and Mr. Gordon," she added with a good-humored smile.

The train was pulling in when they reached the station but she did not forget to yield him her lips, and her last words were, "I'll write you to-morrow." To Gordon that farewell kiss was inexpressibly affecting. It was Phyllis's public acknowledgment of their relationship and his emotion was perhaps colored by a certain pride in this evidence of his conquest of so beautiful and desirable a woman.

Like the fragrance of a beautiful flower the episode suffused his whole day. And it was but yesterday morning that he had sat stunned as by a bullet's blow at the news of another girl's engagement. He smiled derisively as he recalled it. Now he was to marry Phyllis. A month ago who would have predicted it? What an interesting, stimulating, altogether entertaining experience was life. Too long had he been a mere observer; now he was beginning to live.

Boarding the tug which lay alongside the dock he found Captain Tucker seated in the pilot house before a table which ordinarily swung flat against the wall. Pipe in mouth the old man sat watching the antics of a group

of small brown objects which lurched drunkenly about on the wooden surface. "Mexican jumping beans," he explained. "Just got 'em in the mail from Dan Kavanaugh down on the Gulf job. I suppose there's some kind of worm or insect inside makes 'em jump about so. They say if you give 'em water once a week they'll jump for months."

Gordon sat down. "Captain, they remind me of ourselves," he observed after awhile. "Hopping blindly about in obedience to some obscure instinct; with no knowledge of their final goal; no conception of a world outside that little bean.

"A riddle this since Time began  
Which many a sage his mind hath bent to;  
All came and went but never man  
Knew whence they came or where they went to.

"We must look like that to the gods and probably they're looking down on us right now with the same impassive interest that we focus on these things."

"Now that's what it is to have a head like yours, Parson," exclaimed Captain Tucker admiringly. "I wouldn't o' thought o' that in

twenty years. Or if I had I couldn't ov said it so slick. You're wasted in this business. You ought to be writing books or making speeches or something. You're a philosopher. Ain't that right, Cap'n Sorenson?"

The Swede scratched a match. "Pad pisi-ness," he grunted. "Petter nod tink such thoughts. Make pelieve as how tings bane wort toing. Only way to get trough. Trouble my peeble—tink too teep. Make 'em what you call . . ." he hesitated, groping, "me-lan-cholly," he pronounced it laboriously, sounding the "ch" as in "choice." He turned away from the jumping beans as though disapproving the train of thought they engendered.

But it was not of jumping beans that Gordon was thinking that evening when he sat down to write at the little table in his room. Soft arms encircled his neck and Phyllis's low voice seemed again to say, in startled wonder, "I love you." Occasionally his pen would stop and for uncounted minutes he would gaze foolishly into space, yielding himself utterly to the spell of memory, experiencing again with scarcely muted poignancy the thrill of the previous evening.

His letter to Phyllis completed, he wrote a

brief note to Patricia congratulating her upon her engagement but making no reference to his own. He would leave the time and manner of the announcement to Phyllis.



## CHAPTER XXI

PHYLLIS'S letters to Gordon were curiously decorous with a decidedly literary flavor, as though she viewed them as experiments in English composition. It seemed incredible that they could be an expression of the same girl who had yielded her mouth to him, lain in his arms, avowed her love. She wrote of her family's ingenuous pride in her journalistic success; of the scrapbook of her writings which her mother was keeping; of her sisters' awed regard. "I have not told them of our engagement yet because I want you to be absolutely sure. My absence will be a kind of test; not for me, for I need none, but for you, my beloved. I want you to feel completely free."

One letter contained her photograph taken in her commencement frock. Gordon propped it up on a table. In its classic poise, its calm, frank gaze, a certain serenity of expression, it was reminiscent of some famous painting which he had seen.

“She looks like Abbott Thayer’s ‘Caritas,’ ” he suddenly exclaimed aloud. He felt humbled at the thought of her surrender of her future to his care. And he condemned himself for having criticized what had sometimes seemed to him the rigid formalism of her outlook, her failure to comprehend his tolerant sympathy for humanity’s weakness, the fraternal affection which he felt and displayed towards all kinds of people deemed socially and ethically impossible by the respectable and respected. He did not realize how fundamental and far-reaching was the gulf thus indicated nor how soon was Fate prankishly to accentuate it.

“Oh, Douglas, people are looking!” Phyllis colored hotly and yet her self-consciousness subtracted nothing from the warmth of the kiss she bestowed upon him as he lifted her down from the steps of the train. “I’m so glad to get back.” As he slipped in under the wheel of his car, she snuggled closely against him. She told him the details of her visit; her family’s pleasure in her success; how one of her sisters had explained in introducing her to a schoolmate that Phyllis was a “writer.”

“It’s amusing, isn’t it? And all over those

childish little tales which any high school girl could write.

"Oh, it's wonderful to get back," she repeated. "I missed you so."

"And I . . . you had your family. While I had but the cold comfort of a photograph."

"How dear she is to me!" Gordon thought as a warm rush of feeling enveloped them: the natural reaction perhaps to their fortnight's separation.

It was but a few evenings after Phyllis's return; a warm June night, the heavy fragrance of the roses sharpened by the tonic touch of a threatened sea turn. Gordon had driven to Hereford for an hour with a dentist and was scheduled to return by nine o'clock. As he drove slowly through the narrow streets of the old fishing town thinking of Phyllis whom he would find awaiting him on the porch, he suddenly heard sounds which seemed to presage a disturbance. He was driving through a water-front street when he heard high words from a disreputable "speak-easy" on the corner.

"Yesh, I'm over shixty an' all shotopieshes from booshe an' shtillanall I c'n lick any shon-

of agunafo Herf'd fish'man th't ever shailed to the Banksh!"

Crash! went a glass splintered to fragments, flung perhaps by the speaker to emphasize his challenge. Gordon recognized the voice as Captain Tucker's. At the same time he saw a knot of fishermen who had been standing outside begin to drift through the swinging doors. Gordon pulled up to the curb—stopped his engine—leapt out. He entered. Through the heavy haze of pipe smoke he discerned the *Valiant's* full complement lined up at the bar. Captain Sorenson, his mate Flannery, the engineer, Shea, a huge, freckle-faced, red-headed Irishman, and three deck hands; also Jerry O'Hearn, Gordon's superintendent, Dennie McTighe, a walking boss and Captain Tucker—nine in all, and all drunk. Gordon recalled that it was the captain's birthday. A yell of recognition went up. He was dragged to the bar, pounded on the back; everybody demanded that he shake hands, have a drink, join the party.

"Parshon, itsh plumb prov'densh'l," Captain Tucker assured him earnestly, swaying slightly from side to side. "Here itsh my



birthday an' I wanted you more'n anyone; n'herey'are, n'moren'nat I got to lick some o' these godam fish'men, n'moren' likely I'll kill a half doz'shn, n'maybe a doz'shn and here y'are, parshon, to giv'm a," he hesitated, could his tongue manipulate it?—"to gim'a fun'l shervish."

Roars of Homeric laughter from the Bellport group, but the captain's sally found no response from the fishermen who were gradually filling the saloon.

Gordon downed a glass of whiskey feeling that only by seeming to join in could he control in any degree what promised to develop into an ugly situation. He hoped to get the captain into the machine. He studied the Bellport men closely seeking to ascertain if any retained any signs of sobriety or caution. O'Hearn seemed least affected, physically at any rate.

"Going to be an awful row, Jerry," he muttered into the latter's ear. "The captain's too old for a rumpus. Can't we get him home? My machine's outside."

"Don't you worry, parson, 'bout Cap'n Tucker. He's drunker'n any of us. Too drunk to put up a fight. So he'll just flop in

a chair or somewheres while the rest of us is stanin' up to it. Too late to get 'im out anyways. Hell, parson, we'll clean 'em out. Stick eroun'—goin' to be a gran' fight! These fishermen's a husky gang." It was plain that O'Hearn's chief fear was that the foemen might prove unworthy of their mettle.

"But look here, O'Hearn—what about the job? You'll all land in the lock-up."

"Saturday night, parson, to-morrow's Sunday. Come on, have another drink!"

Someone put a nickle in the mechanical piano and above the clamor of drink-thickened voices sounded a snatch of jazz.

"Now thash what I mean. I shay all fish'men 'shended from g'rillas; all Her'ford fish'men anyway. It's shience. Not you an' me. But fish'men. Look a' tha' one. Ain't he g'rilla? Provsh it." Captain Tucker's voice broke a momentary lull, as standing unsteadily by the bar, he pointed with wavering finger at a heavily built, swarthy man whose shirt, opened at the throat, disclosed a hairy chest. The man was drunk as was everyone present, in greater or less degree, except Gordon and the two barkeepers.

"Gorilla, eh?" he yelled. "I'll g'rilla you,

you dam potbellied ol' gopher!" He stepped from a group of fishermen, lurched up to the captain and flung a schooner of beer in his face. Captain Tucker never landed his blow as the man dropped instantly from O'Hearn's smash on the jaw.

Bedlam broke loose. For a few moments man stood up to man, but it swiftly degenerated into a chaotic battle in which one fought blindly and desperately hoping that he was hitting one of the enemy. Gordon was fighting a lithe little leopard of a Portuguese when a blow on his ear nearly sent him through the window. He ducked and swung on the aggressor, landed squarely between his eyes, pivoted to meet his original foe to find him groaning on the floor. Shea had smashed him in the solar plexus. Sorenson, slow at footwork, proved to have a terrific wallop in his fists. He stood, back to the bar, and with awkward power floored every man who stood up to him. He suddenly went down, however, a blow over the head with a bottle laying him out.

"Ye cowardly shcut!" yelled McTighe, and with a heavy glass schooner caught the man who had sneaked up behind the Swede. It



struck him in the temple; he reeled and went down. The crowd swayed and lurched about the saloon. Grunts, groans, curses resounded. The Bellport men though outnumbered were holding their own and better. They formed a more compact group than their opponents; had more *esprit de corps*. Isolated in the enemy's territory they felt that they had to win. Thus they fought with a desperate energy denied the man who could if he wished step out of the door into the street. But their difficulty was that their opponents seemed to be indefinitely reinforced. New faces constantly appeared.

Captain Tucker almost winded and considerably sobered by the mental concentration demanded by the exigencies of the occasion yelled into Gordon's ear as the latter staggered against him stunned for a moment by a clout on the jaw, "Got to get gang together. Fight way to tug."

The word was passed along and the Bellport men gradually gathered into a knot. Sorenson was once more on his feet though obviously groggy. Blood streamed down his face from a cut on his head. They began backing out of the door when the clatter of a



clanging bell pierced the din of the struggle. Two patrol wagons were pulling up to the curb. The street seemed suddenly filled with blue coats—clubs rose and fell with business-like precision. The police betrayed no partisanship. Bellport or Hereford meant nothing at the moment. Here was a bar-room fight of unusual violence; the thing to do was to hit everyone in sight; quell the disturbance; fill the patrol wagons and drive off.

As Gordon lurched out of the saloon a hand grasped his collar; his fist shot up instinctively . . . missed . . . a club fell . . . everything went black. His next recallable sensation was a sense of desperately swimming upwards toward the air from a black void in which he was suffocating. He came back to consciousness to find himself in a patrol wagon filled with combatants of both camps who now in the face of their common misfortune were fraternizing. They pulled up at the station; were yanked before the desk sergeant, charges preferred, entered, and then hustled below.

Gordon found himself the sole occupant of a cell in shape like a horse stall and about half its size. In the dim light which emanated from the corridor he discerned a narrow pallet

covered with an incredibly dirty comforter. He realized that he would in all probability at the very worst be kept over Sunday, and fined Monday morning. Nevertheless he was amazed to discover how the confinement galled him. He felt like a trapped animal and realized that never before had he appreciated the boon of freedom. It was not until from a neighboring cell he heard McTighe's voice raised in a dismal rendition of "My Wild Irish Rose" that the humor of the situation struck him, and he laughed aloud.

"Zat you, parson?" called McTighe. "I niver tought you'd come to an end like this. But I must say you put up a grand fight. I seen you paste the Portagee in the guts."

Then by calling one to another they took a census, discovering that Sorenson, McTighe, O'Hearn, Flannery and Gordon were apparently the only Bellport men caught in the drag-net. Followed much speculation as to their probable fates which ranged from Sorenson's pessimistic prediction of thirty days on the rockpile to McTighe's hope that "bein' mostly Irishmen the police would be aisy on 'em."

"But it's a shame that the parson should

be here with all us drunken scoundrels," he asserted, "an' him tryin' to keep the peace and spare ol' Tucker a lickin'. Whin they see him and how he's a gintleman an' all, sure they'll let him off. Though I'm free to say he fought like a demon."

The night seemed endless but eventually the gray light of the dawn, obscene in that setting, revealed the bleak filth of their Dante-like surroundings. At last a quiet, competent-looking man in his forties appeared. He was, it developed, the probation officer. Gordon could hear McTighe indignantly explaining the outrage of Gordon's imprisonment, "an' him drivin' by in his automobile and seein' us wild wit the drink and comin' in to stop the row and endin' up in jail. It's a wicked shame, Mr. Officer."

"Mr. Gordon?" the man stood at the cell door.

"Yes. I heard McTighe pleading my case. He's right enough, though I must admit that after the fight started I was in it."

"Evidently," the stranger laughed. Gordon's collar was hanging, a torn rag, his cravat had disappeared. He unlocked the door and Gordon stepped out.



"I'll have to hold the others," he explained, "though as all your men are first offenders, in Hereford at least, the Judge will probably give them only a five or ten dollar fine. Perhaps you'd better arrange to have the money in the courtroom to-morrow morning."

Gordon shook hands with his men; promised to be on hand next day and discovered himself blinking in the bright sunshine of a warm Sunday morning. A street car took him to the scene of conflict where he found his automobile, which fortunately he had locked upon leaving, standing unharmed before the saloon. He was able to secure a fresh collar at the hotel where he breakfasted and after a bath and shave was once more fairly presentable. The lump on his head was covered by his hat.

It was a sufficiently respectable looking individual who drove up to Mrs. Hale's at about church time, although he felt wan and leaden from lack of sleep.

"Land sakes, Mr. Gordon, whatever happened last night? Captain Tucker comes creakin' in 'round daylight and ain't up yet. Just groaned when I knocked an' told him breakfast was ready. An' they say the tug come home without Cap'n Sorenson an' that



they'd been a turrible fracas over in Hereford an' how the police had to be called out an' some says the militia, an' how a lot o' your men is in prison an' goodness knows what! What's a body to believe?" Mrs. Hale's greeting as Gordon mounted the porch steps. Phyllis, winsome in a light summer frock, coming out at the moment, he sat down and told the two women the story.

Mrs. Hale's pleasure in the recital was obvious from her expressions of shocked incredulous horror. "Well, did you ever! Why, Mr. Gordon! Think of that!" and a strange tzutting of her tongue. But Phyllis was silent. She looked as though she were listening to an account of life among the Yahoos by a returned traveler.

It was not until having slept until nearly four o'clock that Gordon learned her reaction. Coming downstairs, refreshed, he suggested a walk. Captain Tucker had arisen at about one o'clock, refused food, and tottered out to the quarry.

"Poor old Captain Tucker," remarked Gordon. "He is too old for such junkets. He won't be himself for a week."

They were seated beneath an ancient elm

on the brink of an abandoned quarry. Phyllis withdrew her hand. Her face stiffened. "I confess I can't see anything funny in that occurrence. I think it was disgraceful and I can't see, Douglas, why you had to be mixed up in it. You might have been killed, or killed someone. Why didn't you just drive on when you saw they were all drunk?"

"Well, I can't say that I helped very much. But somehow I felt a certain responsibility. They're my gang, you know. And the old clan instinct probably was a factor." His tone was mildly apologetic.

"That is the strangest thing to me. How can you recognize any bond with men like that; drinking, swearing, dissolute quarrymen?" Phyllis looked puzzled, pained, and a bit indignant. "I believe it's a pose. It's absurd, a man of your fine instincts and sensitiveness. As for that old reprobate Tucker, you know how I disapprove of him. And sure enough he was responsible for it."

"But don't you see, dear, these men are fine—underneath—finer in many ways than most men of more education. They're less politic, more genuine. Take Captain Tucker—" but Gordon ceased. Something warned him of

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the hopelessness of converting her to his viewpoint. She was a snob, not a money snob nor a blood snob, but a manners-and-morals, culture snob.

"It's just the woman of it," Gordon reflected patiently. "Of course, their standards are different." And if the thought of another woman who would have understood came to him, it was promptly effaced by the sweetness of the kiss Phyllis yielded as a token of her faith in their ultimate agreement.

Secretly Phyllis viewed Gordon's easy Bohemianism and instinctive unconventionality as a mere lack of sophistication which would be overcome by contact with her quite obviously more correct standards. That the pint measure was criticizing the quart for not conforming was a conception which could never occur to her.

## CHAPTER XXII

GORDON was filling his radiator preparatory to starting off for a Sunday with Phyllis along the New Hampshire shore roads when a smart racy-looking roadster drove up. It was Patricia. Phyllis was in the house putting up their lunch so, perhaps happily, missed their meeting. For Gordon's face, always easily read, beamed like the July sun.

"This is Mr. Beaudry, I suppose," and he shook hands with the scrupulously dressed man who shared the seat. Patricia was at the wheel. Phyllis coming out at the moment was then introduced.

"Come along in my car," suggested Gordon. "We'll just fill another basket with some of Mother Hale's sandwiches and things, and make a day of it."

"An inspiration!" Patricia characteristically ignored her companion in her decision and drove her car into Mrs. Hale's barn. A few minutes later found them whizzing northward, Gordon driving, Phyllis beside him, their



guests in the tonneau. Gordon with masculine density wondered that Phyllis should be so demonstrative; Phyllis who had kissed him but twice before others, who was morbidly sensitive about a display of affection. Now she was nestling close, almost dangerously so, considering his responsibility as pilot.

Patricia promptly grasped the situation. "Wants me to realize the changed status," she reflected. "And isn't she beautiful? but so coldly so." Then, so strangely are we constituted, "Anyway I was the first woman he ever kissed."

"A week ago this morning I was just coming out of jail," and Gordon told them of the episode, embroidering it so fancifully that even Phyllis joined in their laughter.

"I suppose you have a pretty tough class of men to handle in your line of work," suggested Beaudry. They had pulled up for a moment for a vista of cliff and sunlit cove.

"No," Gordon replied after a minute's reflection, "I don't believe there are any tough classes. There are tough individuals in every stratum; essentially brutal. Often they're attracted to work which is likely to supply an outlet for their instincts, such as strike-

breaking or the New York police force. I met a well-dressed man, a banker, in the Pullman smoker coming on from New York this spring, who was fundamentally tougher than any of my men: wanted to string up all labor leaders by the thumbs, or so he said. And one of the gentlest men I've ever seen was an ex-railroad fireman, now a reformer." He named the man Patricia and he had heard speak.

"Why, Douglas, that man is a menace!" exclaimed Phyllis peremptorily; "a demagogue! They jailed him in Chicago years ago in a great strike."

"How tactless!" Gordon pretended to be serious. "Don't you imagine I'm sensitive?"

"Sincere perhaps but surely misguided," suggested Beaudry suavely.

"Misguided according to our lights perhaps," broke in Patricia. "And our lights are carefully trimmed to serve our interests. I heard him one night with Douglas and I've never been the same since."

"But to get back to the subject," and Gordon began a rambling account of a quaint character who had once wandered into a construction camp of his in the West, and who turned out to be an amateur evangelist. Feeling a

responsibility as host, he successfully steered the conversation into less controversial channels. But fundamental antagonisms have a way of cropping up despite tacit compromises to suppress them.

They stopped for lunch on the shores of a pebbly cove. Their appetites sharpened by the keen salt air, they devoured Mrs. Hale's sandwiches and apple pie with enthusiasm. A thermos supplied coffee. After which Gordon lighted his pipe and Beaudry, producing a heavy silver case embossed with the Beaudry arms, offered the girls cigarettes. Phyllis's refusal was delivered with what seemed to Gordon a pharisaical air, particularly in view of Patricia's prompt acceptance.

"Come now, Phyllis," objected Gordon banteringly, "we don't demand that you smoke but don't be unco guid about it."

"I'm not unco guid," protested Phyllis. "I just don't like cigarettes. Why deliberately invite a habit which I've never acquired? And it's not so easy to break it." She turned to Patricia for confirmation.

"Pay no attention to that man," Patricia advised. "He's tiresome in his rigid unconvictionality. You can always forecast his at-



titude. Nor is that all I have against him. The capacity of hating people was left out of him. It is, therefore, no compliment to have him like you."

Gordon grinned good-naturedly behind his briar. "I suppose you're hardened against her attacks," he turned to Beaudry who lay on his back, head clasped between his hands. "She leaves one no illusions about oneself."

"*Enfant terrible*. But I'll reform her," he asserted with mock severity. "She's been spoiled."

Beneath the flickering surface of their talk, however, were obscurely felt undercurrents. Beaudry was feeling vaguely that it was odd that in their relationship he and Patricia had never achieved the note of easy uncritical camaraderie which plainly marked the bond between her and Gordon. Attracted by Patricia's beauty and popularity he had been drawn into her orbit by these attributes, to be held by her fresh, direct unspoiled outlook.

Beaudry valued himself highly. The only son in a family of four girls, he had been a serious student at Yale, contemptuous of the pagan, pleasure-seeking standards of his environment. In a period when athletics were



the road to preferment and to gain one's Y was equivalent to an order of knighthood, he had sought and secured a *magna cum* and a Phi Beta Kappa key. His sport had been fencing which he practised for exercise not honors. Upon leaving college he had wished to pursue a scholar's career and dreamed of historical studies covering the mediaeval period, to bear fruit eventually in thick tomes; but duty called him to his place in the old established house of Beaudry and Company, Bankers and Brokers. It was his earnestness and finely disciplined mind which had attracted Patricia. Her mother had been delighted as an alliance with the Beaudry clan marked a decided upward step for the Kellers.

To Patricia, Beaudry's contempt for the standards of family and money, which seemed so important to her mother, indicated independence and firmly rooted democracy. Only recently had she discovered that he too was an exclusionist but by a different scale of values. Intellect was Allen Beaudry's yardstick, a less ignoble standard than the more usual but still, she felt, a limitation.

Patricia's reactions were more primitive. Engaged to Beaudry and consequently, it was

to be assumed, fancy free in other contacts, she felt a fierce resentment at Phyllis's appropriation of Gordon. And as she thought it over she accused herself. "It isn't merely that I don't like *her*. I'd hate any woman who had captured him. Why am I such a dog in the manger? Do I want both men? Am I a polyandrist?" She, too, could not but reflect upon the difference between the easy intimacy of her relations with Gordon as contrasted with her attitude toward Beaudry. She was so completely herself with Gordon. Between her and Beaudry were mutual respect, sex-pull, congenial interests. "But I don't really feel that I know him and understand him as I do Douglas," she mused. "I wonder if I ever shall? And what is there about him that makes me visualize him as wearing 'siders' and a square-topped derby?"

Phyllis did not conceal from herself her dislike of Patricia. She feared her hold upon Gordon, disapproved her standards, was honest enough to concede her beauty. "She's cheap and underbred. And because she has so much to spend on clothes, probably is patronizing me inside. And see what a splendid fellow she has trapped. I do wish Douglas

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would be just a bit more dignified and conscious of his own qualities." Beaudry had about him an air which reminded her of the young dean of her college. And he, to Phyllis, was the ultimate.

Gordon alone, less prone to self-probing than the others, appeared completely content. His pride in Phyllis's beauty was evident nor could she help but feel flattered by it. Beaudry seemed an admirable chap, far superior to the usual run of men in Patricia's group. And to be loafing about in the open with Patricia again, the woman he loved beside him, the woman he most liked opposite, the warm sun tempered by the edge of the sea breeze—surely this was Nirvana.

This is a cross section of their reactions at a certain plane of consciousness. A plane deeper perhaps than most of them cared to recognize at the moment, even to themselves. And although subtle antagonisms were present, as in most human relations, they at least found each other interesting—even stimulating. It was with the promise of a later reunion that Patricia and Beaudry drove off through the mellow twilight.



With an air of maternal tolerance Phyllis turned to Gordon as their guests swept around a turn in the road. "She has charm, I'll confess, but you men can't read a girl like that as a woman can. Mr. Beaudry is too good for her."

"That's a very nice fellow," observed Beaudry. "But they seem oddly paired. The girl is so—what shall I say? So provincial somehow, with her primness and regard for the proprieties. And he's so relaxed and Bohemian that I imagine he's incapable even of feeling and resenting her conventionality. I suppose he fell for her beauty. I didn't realize how well you knew him."

Patricia was silent a moment, intent upon edging past a large van which droned clumsily along ahead.

"Yes, we used to trot about last winter," she explained and went on to tell of some of their joint expeditions. "But I agree with you—they are not adapted to each other. She'll try to reform him and it's hopeless. He doesn't resent the world's standards; he ignores them. I suppose she'll want to make



him a success and nothing would bore him more. He's tremendously interested in his work but has no financial ambition whatever, that is, so far as I've ever discovered. Dad says he's revolutionized the operation of the business."

"I wonder he didn't fall in love with you," Beaudry eyed her keenly. "It's an easy thing to do, you know; at least it was for me."

Patricia's face was impassive in profile.

"No, he's not susceptible. And I'm just wondering how and why that girl got him. She heartily disapproved of me, I don't know why. I suppose to her I must appear bold and forward."

"Perhaps she thought that Gordon had cared for you," he flung out the suggestion impersonally.

"No, it's just that a girl of her type resents everyone, man or woman, who was a friend of 'her man's' before she got her clutches on him."

Beaudry laughed at the phrase. "I suppose she refers to you as having got your clutches on me," he suggested. His blue eyes, a cold blue some people called them, twinkled behind his eyeglasses.

"Well, I have," confessed Patricia; "or

hope I have! The first time I saw you in the lobby of the Poinciana surveying that crowd of over-dressed, overfed, affected, competitive creatures who represent American success, I liked you. Your face was a study, that detached expression of scientific curiosity as though they were under your microscope. Remember? I had Billy Shafter bring you over."

"Yes, and you said, 'What are you doing in this place? Writing a monograph on the manners and customs of the genus millionensis?' I thought it keen that you should have read my thoughts before I'd said a word. Also flattering."

"And I said, 'So this is our aristocracy. At least the society editors say so.'"

"Well, we have an aristocracy, I suppose," Beaudry suggested, "but that isn't it. It is comprised of the people, generally of the middle class economically, whose creed is that of Channing's 'Symphony.' Recall it? To live content with small means, to seek wealth not riches and so on? Genuine people whose aspirations are intellectual and ethical; not social and financial, and who try to impress no one, not even themselves.

"They possess a social sense, a realization that citizenship carries obligations as well as privileges. Isn't that our aristocracy?"

"Perhaps so," she assented. "That scale of values is certainly superior to the shoddy ostentation of money and family, for family is merely money again, a generation or two removed. To be born a patrician merely means that one's forebears were climbers. But I feel somehow that even the standards you've just expounded connote limitation. Take Mr. Gordon, for example. He seems to exclude no one. One would say that he must have some standards but I've never been able to discover them, except that naturally enough he prefers genuine people to poseurs. Yet, strangely, I've seen many posing people drop their pose when they met him."

"I'm an optimist," asserted Beaudry. "When I observe the people of sixty and over, particularly, if you'll forgive my lack of chivalry, the women—so artificial and full of pretensions—and compare them with the younger generation, I take hope. Jazz, cigarettes, cocktails, laxness, noisiness and all: I accept them. These are but defects of their qualities. We're breeding real people at least;

people who are more honest with themselves and each other. I recall a short story in *Scribner's*, 'Each in His Generation,' it was called, which epitomized the situation." By the time he had relayed the tale they were pulling up before the Tudor Arms.

"Just in time for dinner," Patricia said. "How I hate hotel cooking. I'd like to be sitting down to Mrs. Hale's table. That apple pie!"

"And she remains a widow!" exclaimed Beaudry incredulously.



## CHAPTER XXIII

“So Major Parsons is coming Wednesday.” Captain Tucker picked up Gordon’s pouch from his desk and filled his pipe. “One of the chilliest propositions I ever met. I knew it the first time I ever saw him just from his make-up. He wears two little white siders, fenders I call ’em. And he never takes a drink, a smoke, or uses any but sewing circle language. But he’s in charge of the Northeastern Department and is Denton’s boss, so we’ll have to give him the glad hand. Guess he’ll find everything up to specifications. We’ll ship our fifteen thousand tons this month, won’t we, Parson?”

“A trifle more.” Gordon consulted a tabulated slip which he extracted from a drawer. “But that’s sub-rosa, Captain. For some reason or other Mr. Keller seems secretive about these tonnage figures. Warned me last summer never to divulge them outside the family; that’s you and me and Jerry. And of course Mr. Denton here.”

Tucker nodded. "Yes, I know, he tipped me off too."

"Least said, soonest mended," asserted Denton acridly. He sat gazing out a seaward window which commanded a view of the dock, busy this summer morning with its carloads of granite running out to the waiting dump scow in monotonous succession.

"That's your motto, all right, ain't it, Denton? I never knew you to use three words where two would do." "The man of mystery" was the phrase he had coined for him due to the inspector's taciturn monosyllabic manner of speech.

Denton disdained to reply. A half hour later, alone in the office, he picked up the telephone. "Hello . . . Western Union? Wire for New York, collect. John B. Keller. . . . get it? care of Keller Construction Company, 8 West Fortieth Street. Yes . . . Fortieth. Ready? Parsons due Wednesday. Act accordingly. Rogers." He listened intently while it was repeated, then rang off.

"Well, what do you suppose the old man wants now?" Gordon and Captain Tucker were seated in the smoker speeding southwards. "Let's see that wire again." He

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spread out the crackling surface and read it carefully hoping to discover the solution.

“Meet me Hotel Touraine ten A M Wednesday bring Tucker. Keller.”

“Give it up. Perhaps he’s planning to bid on the Connecticut River jetties.” They fell to discussing the facilities for handling that project. Arrived at the North Station, they took the subway and entered the lobby of the hotel at ten minutes before the hour. There was Keller, his red face dimly discernible in a haze of cigar smoke, scanning the morning’s issue of the *New York Times*.

“By the way, Major Parsons is due to-day.” Captain Tucker informed him after some talk about the shipment of an additional traveling crane from a Southern job.

“Parsons due, eh? Well, the gov’ment’s never had to kick about any of our work.” Keller began to tell them about the successful application of some of Gordon’s innovations to the Gulf job.

“Miss Patricia was down Sunday with her beau,” remarked Tucker after a pause. “I seen her for a minute at Miss Hale’s. Said

she'd brought him down for my endorsement. A Mr. Brodie."

"Beaudry," corrected Keller with a laugh. "Yes, and I think she's picked a good one. He's a solid sensible fellow with a fine education. Beaudry & Company, one of the old landmarks of Wall Street. I suspected Wellington was kind of sweet on her there at one time, but I guess he didn't measure up."

"And how's Clifford?"

"That boy!" Keller smiled ruefully. "Well, Captain, you've been a Keller Construction man for over twenty years. You went through two crashes with me and I don't forget that you voluntarily went along without a cent of pay for over a year. But I can't see you ever working for Cliff. He ain't an outdoor man; that's the truth of it. He'll wind up as a lawyer or some such grafting game as that, where they get paid for what they've learned out of books. Gets good marks at college though and lives inside his allowance. To tell you the truth, I believe he's accumulating a bank account. It ain't natural, is it?"

Tucker laughed. "Takes all kinds, Mr. Keller. He'll probably wind up as a corpora-



tion lawyer and make a dollar where you do a dime. And no worries either."

"Well, you can size him up shortly. My wife and Pat are down at Jasmine now, as you know. Cliff will be along shortly and I'll be down in a couple of weeks. But let's go up to my room. I want to go over the specifications on the Connecticut River jetties with you."

For the next two hours they were deeply involved in matters technical. "You see," explained Keller, "this point I've bought is only twenty miles distant. I told 'em I was thinking of building a summer hotel. Didn't tell 'em it was for Romans though. It offers good shelter for the floating stock. Now McCann & Cook handled the last installment at \$3.46 a ton but lost money on it. They'll bid higher this time." So they threshed it out, although as both counsellors knew, Keller would make up his own mind at the last minute.

"Well, how about this afternoon? Let's make a day of it." Keller leaned back in his chair inhaling the first few puffs of his after-luncheon cigar. "It's pretty hot. Let's go

down to some beach resort by boat for a shore dinner. You can get an evening train for Bellport and I'll go back to New York on the midnight."

"It's a temptation, though if we go back now we might see Parsons before he leaves." Gordon glanced at Tucker.

"Oh, bother Parsons! He's an old fuddy-duddy anyway. O'Hearn and Denton can show him the whole works. You're too conscientious, Gordon." Keller's grin was irresistible.

A taxi took them to the wharf on Atlantic Avenue where they boarded the Nantasket boat. Gordon who had never been down Boston harbor surveyed the surroundings with interest. The skyline astern with its one skyscraper, the Custom House tower, dominating all the horizon, prompted Keller's explanation that a local ordinance forbade high buildings, a law to be transcended only by a federal structure. "It's a quaint old museum of a town. While the New Englanders are studying their genealogies, the Irish run its politics. Give me little ol' New York."

A swim whetted their appetites for dinner,

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over which they lingered so long that they barely caught the theatre train at the North Station.

“Well, Captain, what is it now?” chaffed Gordon after a long silence in which Tucker had sat with knitted brows.

“Oh, nothing in particular,” then after a pause, “Only there was something more behind this jaunt to-day than appears on the surface. Looks to me as though someone, for some reason, didn’t want us, you and me, to be in contact with old Major Parsons. Now why?”

“Wake me up when you get it, Captain.” Gordon promptly fell asleep to awaken with a start at the conductor’s shout, “Bellport, Bellport! All out! End of the line! Bellport!”

## CHAPTER XXIV

“DOUGLAS, I can't bear to think of going. Isn't there some way out of it? I just know that Mrs. Keller is an impossible, purse-proud, pseudo-cultured creature. Patricia and I haven't really anything in common. They'll be patronizing in their attitude, and I'll make sneering remarks about the *nouveaux riche* as a consequence. And to dine with them and spend a whole evening! It's horrible. Besides I have nothing to wear.”

Phyllis jabbed her pen viciously into the blotter which lay before her on the table. They were seated in a little, top-story room which Mrs. Hale had turned over to her for a study. The calm quietude of the summer evening contrasted oddly with the air of tension which hung over them.

“Oh, come now. The Kellers are all right. It's out of the goodness of her heart that Mrs. Keller has invited us. You see, I'm a kind of friend of the family as well as employee. I hate to offend them. Don't worry about



clothes. You know what a summer hotel is these days. Half the women will dash in off the links in sport clothes." For some minutes they argued the point until finally with a "Well, I suppose being engaged implies obligations as well as privileges," Phyllis submitted. She held her left hand toward the light so that the diamond catching its rays sparkled brilliantly. She had not yet achieved the nonchalantly unconscious air regarding it which she sought to acquire.

To Gordon Phyllis looked regal as she came down the stairs the following evening dressed for the Kellers' affair. Her dainty summer dinner frock seemed to him completely appropriate, but he concluded that his masculinely obtuse vision blinded him to its drawbacks. Truth to tell, it was a charming gown; Phyllis's objection had on that count been merely a subterfuge. He had slipped into a dinner coat and from Mrs. Hale their festive appearance evoked an exclamation of admiration.

"You certainly make a likely looking pair," she averred with enthusiasm. "I knew how 'twould be, long before either of you two." And she cackled a triumphant cackle.

"That's right," confirmed Captain Tucker

who sat smoking his pipe, huge feet elevated upon the porch rail. "Miss Hale told me all about it long ago. And I laughed at her, knowin' the parson's ways."

"You may know Mr. Gordon but I knew human nature." Mrs. Hale shook her head sapiently, her round, good-humored bespectacled face with its quaint little button of a nose beaming approval upon her handiwork. "And I guess they ain't made no mistake."

Phyllis flushed with irritation. These public discussions of private affairs tried her.

"Advantages or not I should think people would have perceptions sufficiently sensitive to avoid that sort of thing," she exclaimed pettishly as they drove off.

"Why, they are two of the best-hearted folks you ever met," defended Gordon. "Don't let their simple unsophistication get on your nerves." Then, turning in his seat to survey her, "You're simply the most gorgeous thing to-night that I ever looked at," he exclaimed with solemn emphasis. Phyllis colored with pleasure. For a girl of her striking beauty she was oddly unconscious of it, but she nevertheless appreciated this tribute to her appearance.

"Love is blind," she replied softly.

They talked of her work and his, of their plans for an autumn wedding. "You must arrange to come out to visit my people some time in August even if only for a couple of days," she announced. "I've written them all about you but you may imagine their curiosity. It would be an ordeal for most men but you won't mind it. You're so free from self-consciousness. How my sisters will stare and chatter. And Dad. He'll be relieved at your theological condition. He's a Unitarian, you know. Your all-inclusive tolerance will appeal to him."

So she ran on until, the hotel glimpsed through the trees, she fell silent. Unaccustomed to social intercourse both by personal predilection and limited opportunity, she feared she would feel stiff and constrained. And with a bride's jealousy of her lover's past she resented Gordon's personal contact with the Kellers. Patricia she felt intuitively to be an actual menace. It was with a smile painfully assumed that she underwent the introduction formula. Clifford, arrived the day previous, eyed her with instant approval. John Keller, bluff and off-hand as usual, re-



marked *sotto voce*, "And they say engineers lack aesthetic perceptions." Mrs. Keller was sufficiently cordial, her society manner relaxed as always under the impact of Gordon's direct personality. Beaudry and Patricia, who arrived warm from the links after the group had been seated, greeted her gaily.

From time to time visitors whom Gordon had met the previous summer would stop to greet him in passing their table. Madge Culver was in Europe but Jack Ingersoll hailed him enthusiastically. Old Mrs. Grimshaw stopped for a moment, and Pamela Caldwell in her usual hyperbolic fashion screamed that he was "just a love" to let them see him again. Which, though she herself felt it to be unreasonable, all gave Phyllis a sense of isolation, of being an outsider. She could, however, she had to confess, discern no signs of patronage and abandoned her plan of a vigorous offensive.

Secure in her consciousness of superior culture, an advantage she knew was shared by Beaudry and Gordon, she had contemplated involving them in a conversation which would leave the rest of the party hopelessly stranded on the shoals of the crassly concrete. What-



ever unpleasant elements might have been injected by the conflicting standards of her hostess and herself were completely buried by the frank good humor of the group. John Keller, in high spirits, asserted that blessed with a charming blonde daughter of whom he was duly appreciative, he had always coveted a brunette, and proposed to adopt Phyllis.

"My father would have something to say," she retorted spiritedly.

"But you confess to three sisters. He could spare one of you."

"A good scheme," broke in Clifford. "We need Miss Winslow to balance the family. Pat's too harum scarum and has no poise. It would be a good influence for her."

"But is she amenable, Cliff?" inquired Beaudry seriously. "Your dignified, even impressive, personality doesn't seem to have benefited her."

"The old case of the prophet," was Clifford's airy verdict. "Napoleon's mother always thought him merely a fool for luck."

After dinner the two couples strolled over to the grounds of a neighboring hostelry in which a bazaar for the benefit of a local charity was in operation. They tried their luck with

skee balls, tested their strength, and finally coming to the booth of a palmist, entered.

"Nathalie Herrick says she's really wonderful," Patricia informed them. "She's a Russian, a Baroness Sokoloff. Her husband's in the embassy at Washington. Here, Allen, we'll give her no clues," and slipping off her engagement ring, she gave it to Beaudry who put it into his waistcoat pocket. Phyllis followed suit.

"It ees de troot what I tell," said the seer, darkly handsome in her barbaric gypsy costume, as the four crowded in, Patricia seating herself and extending her palm. The woman's words were accompanied by a questioning glance at the presence of the group. "You no care?"

"Shoot," exclaimed Patricia. "If they can stand it, I can," and she laughed with a hint of bravado.

"Ze past an' ze futoor, I tell," she said abstractedly as she studied first one palm then the other. "Many lovers have you had, what you call . . ." she hesitated, groping for the phrase in English, "light o' lofes, *pas serieux*. Your nature is . . . what you denote—" she paused, "im-petuous," she pronounced it with

the meticulous care of the foreigner. As with all Russian patricians, French was her customary tongue.

“You do not seek advice. You act wit’ ze impulse. Ver’ frank, ver’ brave, by nature you scorn ze conventione. Lofe you crave; you hunger for ze grand lofe . . . what you call a nature passionment. An’ lofe you will ver’ quick find but . . . not yet—though you know it not. Of children, I see two. Of marriage I see but one, and that when you are of age . . . eight and twenty. Of happiness much. It is a life fortunate. Of money not great deal but ’nuff. You care not for money and *le monde*. Now for ze past to proof de troot. At fifteen, ver’ ill. At thirteen great confusion in finance—your family I mean. Both father and mother now live. One brother—less old. Ver’ quick . . . great misfortune for all. But out of it come joy to you. ’Nuff?” She looked up.

Patricia withdrew her hands quickly. “Plenty,” she replied, and Phyllis seated herself in the chair she vacated.

“Ev’ting joost oppose,” she affirmed after a moment’s scrutiny. “I mean ze char’ctaire. You tink long time ’fore speak. Ver’ conven-



tionale. Talent I see, perhaps with pen. Fame too. A nature repressed, reserved. *Affaires de coeur?*" She shrugged her shoulders. "Not many. You desire them not. Ver' ambitious; you aspire intellect—" she concluded, laughing at her own philological limitations. "Long time finance was bad," she continued, "but that eez gone for always. Ver' hono'ble nature. Like illustrious, great founder of country, cannot tell lie. 'Bout past . . . not many events. Several other children, you oldest. You travel good deal sometime; not much yet. 'Bout marriage . . . yes . . . when 'round thirty. One child. A life sufficient good. No great sadness, no great . . . what you call, 'static happiness." She looked up as Beaudry succeeded her last subject.

"You no believe," she challenged as she noted his smile. "I make you admit." For some minutes she studied his palms, first the right then the left. "Now 'bout past. I say one ting false you stop me. It eez compact?" Beaudry nodded.

"You born ov'seas," she began, "cannot say where but many tousand miles." A puzzled frown appeared on his brow. "You



travel place to place as babe an' little boy, then 'bout ten years old long journey ov'seas . . . suppose you came dis country. 'Gain I see long journey when twenty-four over water, suppose maybe go back to Europe." She looked up, he nodded. She laughed triumphantly. "You want be sa-vant," she went on. "All show it, man study books, l'histoires, maybe dig up old ruin, but . . . not to be. You have strong sense duty, fam'ly pride. You embark on career commercial. I tell de troot?"

"All true so far," he confessed with an air of having the admission wrenched from him.

"Now 'bout ze heart. You want de troot?"

"Go ahead."

"One affaire I see at twenty-one. *Au serieux*, but eet pass. No more to count till 'bout thirty-three or four. Dat pass, too. Then at 'bout forty you marry; have of children two. It is a calm, what you call a placid lofe. No fire . . . but sufficient content. You marry but once. Now 'bout traits. I see a man who lives in tings of ze mind, man who likes not displays nor even power. wants quietude—time to read an' study. Not dynamo type like so many 'merican men.

Some ways like Frenchman. Close bound to fam'ly. Strong justice sense. Strong will, 'special to resist but not type man who belongs in world of affaires. Make good professeur. Life on whole not eventful. An even, not unhappy life. Plenty money always . . . good health. An' now?" She turned to Gordon. Beaudry stood scrutinizing his own palm with an air of bewilderment, seeking to descry in the lines and contours the tell-tale evidence.

Gordon was not smiling. His expression was rather one of eager interest. He lacked sufficient knowledge of his companions' pasts to check the accuracy of the palmist's assertions but, a born mystic, there was to him nothing incredible about the doctrine of fatalism and its corollaries: palmistry, astrology, numerology, and so on. There was in fact much evidence to support such a philosophy.

"So?" said the seeress, talking almost as though to herself as she perused the life map which lay before her. "What ze Orientals call old soul, with many, many pur'fying experiences behind. Ze eart' pull hardly felt. He desire little. Money . . . fame . . . personal 'chievement . . . all gone long time

'go. He lofe justice . . . lofes ev' body. Ze self is hardly present."

"Highly recommended," muttered Beaudry.

"Some send-off!" Gordon's grin failed to disconcert the palmist.

"Now 'bout events," her voice took on a brisker note. "Travel good deal but not over ocean. Both parents gone. All alone. Heart line ver' strange. No lofe affair 'till thirty-six; then . . ." she leant over his palm more intently, "two women. One ze real . . . predestined; one not really count. I can't quite make out. But you get marry 'bout thirty-eight. Two children. Ver' happy. Oh . . . won'erful! Ze grande passion! But terrible time ahead 'fore then. I no like say all I see." She looked helplessly about. Then as Gordon bent over, she murmured something in his ear. He smiled incredulously.

"Yes, yes," she exclaimed aloud. "I see it. Beware. Dey plot. All 'roun' dark forms . . . enemies." Then shrugging her shoulders. "But what use . . . beware? Kismet. No one escape. Ze past? I know. You know I know. I tol' you 'nuff."



She dropped his hand. They walked out; not one entirely unimpressed.

"It's no use falling back on the theory that she knows about us personally," Beaudry was first to break a long silence. "She can't have investigated every one along this shore. That's impossible. I don't mind admitting that she was entirely correct about the events of my past. I was born in Paris when Dad was in charge of our European connections. We came back to New York when I was ten, just as she said. And again after my graduation I took a tour abroad when I was twenty-four. Wonder if she is clairvoyant; reads our pasts and fakes our futures? The character interpretation one could impute to intuition, but it's the events which puzzle me."

"I don't know what to think. I can't credit her forecast of the future." Patricia spoke as though determined to doubt. "I do believe that regarding the past, perhaps, we all carry a scroll of memory, discernible to eyes of psychics. There is a vast mass of inexplicable psychic phenomena recorded in the records of the S. P. R. No one who has ever investigated doubts the truth of it, how-



ever they may differ regarding the explanation."

And so they speculated. Phyllis, though inwardly shaken, pretended to be skeptical. "Though she did say I was the eldest, as I am," she admitted.

Gordon refused to commit himself. "I'll report later," he promised. "She gave me some confidential data which if confirmed by approaching events will sell me palmistry for life."

It was not until on the homeward trip, that Phyllis, bribing him with kisses, extracted the secret from him. "It's too ridiculous," he exclaimed. "She said that she saw me in a court room on trial, and a lot of incredible rot."

"Now I know it's all nonsense," was Phyllis's conclusion. "Still I do hope Patricia cultivates her and finds out more, as she said she planned to."

## CHAPTER XXV

“ODD, wasn’t it, that you and I should have become engaged at almost the same time? Everyone considered you an incorrigible bachelor.”

It was evening in a dark and secluded corner of the hotel porch. Gordon in response to his employer’s summons had driven up from the quarry for dinner and, after an hour’s earnest business discussion, had been waylaid by Patricia, challengingly beautiful in her white gown, as he came out of the lobby.

“Do entertain me for a few minutes,” she had urged. “Allen was conscripted to fill out a bridge foursome. You know how cards bore me . . . and here I am—abandoned.” Lighting a cigarette, Gordon had seated himself beside her in the Gloucester hammock, not altogether annoyed by this obstacle to his prompt departure.

“An incorrigible bachelor.” Gordon repeated the phrase with amusement. “Who

is it—oh, I remember, it's Mencken, who propounds the theory that bachelorhood is a tribute to intelligence, that the less wary succumb to feminine wiles while the intellectually fit survive the snares."

"What piffle! Sounds worthy of a college sophomore. Clifford would hail that as a sapient saying."

"I didn't say I endorsed it. I'm merely quoting." Gordon laughed. Then turning serious. "Yes—it was a coincidence. I am sure you'll be very happy. Beaudry is so obviously a splendid chap and, as you yourself said, has character."

"I am glad you approve. It would never occur to me to care for any one else's opinion. But yours does count for some reason. I think I look upon you as an elder brother; not in the relation as it generally actually is, mutual criticism and targets for each other's wit, but as it is theoretically; a sincere affection and a certain dependence for guidance. You know me well enough to realize that I'm not nearly so independent as my pose indicates. Nor am I as modern as I pretend. I don't seek a career. At heart I'm old fashioned. I want love, and a home

to look after—and a man to fuss over.” Her voice held a tenderly wistful note which touched her listener’s heart strings. In this mood the imperious Patricia seemed so unutterably appealing and defenseless.

Imperceptibly she swayed toward him and as the night wind softly stirred the honeysuckle which hung in heavy festoons about them, he drew a long breath. The sweetness of the flowers merged so delicately into the seductive fragrance which the girl herself exhaled, a rare perfume distilled from the essence of the rose gardens of Roumania, that to Gordon they were indistinguishable. He stirred uneasily. Some impelling power seemed to be drawing him closer to her.

“I don’t see why our friendship should be affected by our marriage,” she continued. “There’s no reason why it should . . . is there? You like Allen, and Phyllis is such a darling.”

“Of course not, except one never knows where an engineer will locate.” Gordon sounded sincere but privately he had misgivings, since hearing Phyllis’s comment, about a lasting bond between the two girls.

“Love is life’s greatest experience, tran-



scending all others; but friendship is precious too. And I do so value ours." Patricia's voice was surcharged with feeling. From the ballroom in another wing came the throbbing rhythm of Offenbach's "Barcarolle." "But our friendship has been so one-sided," she went on. "You have given me so much and received so little."

"How absurd! What would I have done in New York without you? A great city can be the loneliest of places. I was lonely enough after you went South."

"Oh, were you?" Patricia demanded happily. "You've never admitted it."

"Of course I was. And lonely up here too. I missed you." He paused. "That is, until Phyllis came," he added loyally.

"Oh, yes . . . Phyllis. Now you'll never again be lonely. Nor shall I. For I missed you after I left New York. And I so regretted going. But then I met Allen—and it was different."

They fell silent, the distant throbbing of the violins making palpitant the evening quietude, with now and then a cricket's plaintive chirrup sounding a sharper note.

"It was strange, that woman the other eve-

ning—wasn't it?" Patricia's voice held a musing quality as though she were speaking to herself. "I meant to cultivate her but she has gone to Bar Harbor. She said I'd marry in a couple of years but that Allen wouldn't for six. Ridiculous, wasn't it?"

"Obviously."

"And yet she said so much that was so. It was uncanny." She shivered, her gleaming shoulder pressed for a moment against her companion. "And she saw us storm-tossed, you and I. But she didn't say whether or not it was the same storm. But I thought it out afterwards . . . it was the same time anyway."

"Dear Patricia . . . if trouble—real trouble should ever come, you'll let me know?" His voice was grave. "Wherever you or I may be?"

"Yes, Douglas." She spoke solemnly as though making a compact. "Wherever you or I may be." His eyes searched hers deeply and for a long moment they seemed each to be seeking bravely but futilely to expose their inmost selves one to the other.

Patricia sighed. "Douglas, you're so steadfast. I know if I needed you twenty years

from now you'd respond. And I've not an iota of a claim on you."

"We won't argue it," he spoke lightly. "But I'll never forget the good times we had knocking about all those queer joints last winter."

"I loved it. I'm afraid that's one way Allen and I are not completely *en rapport*. He'd stand for the political meetings for, as you know, he's far from being a reactionary. But all those funny, queer quasi-philosophic gatherings which were so deliciously interesting to me; he'd think those utter nonsense. You so expanded my horizon. And ever since I've found life so vastly more interesting. You know in a sense Allen can blame my accepting him to your influence. For I never could have seen a man of his type before you revised my outlook."

"You're shouldering me with a heavy responsibility."

"Am I not?" Then suddenly turning serious, she faced him squarely. "Douglas, do you think I've chosen right?" Her eyes bored into his:

He met her glance steadily but remained silent.

“Patricia—dear—you’ve asked me a question which nobody can possibly answer,” he finally replied. “Nothing in life is more obscure, more hopelessly baffling than love. Anyone can see that you were born for a great love. May God grant you its happy consummation, for, denied it, your life will be wrecked. But I cannot answer your question. No one can.”

“No, you are right. No one can.”

As he stepped off the porch into the clinging fragrance of the July night, she stood, he noted, in turning at a bend of the path, mute and motionless where he had left her, as though lost in contemplation of the problem of life . . . and love.



## CHAPTER XXVI

GORDON'S visit to his fiancée's family was perhaps fortunately not of long duration. Under pressure of Mrs. Winslow's urgent demands, he consented to run the gauntlet at once and on a warm July Friday they started in Gordon's car on the five-hour drive to Greenmeadow, the little western Massachusetts town in which the Reverend Ellery Winslow served his pastorate.

Wearied from their long drive, they rolled slowly down the green, shaded by century-old elms, and pulled up before the parsonage, a quaint white house with green blinds, the roof sloping in a long unbroken line downward in the rear testifying to its eighteenth century origin. They planned to remain Saturday and Sunday morning, starting home Sunday afternoon.

Mrs. Winslow met them at the door, her face wearing that strange, frosty artificial smile which so many women of her period fondly imagine betokens cordiality. Her

face was a palimpsest. Profoundly pessimistic, the result perhaps of seeking to launch four daughters with a country parson's salary as her sole resource, she was convinced that Phyllis, selecting a husband independently of her counsel, must inevitably have made a serious error. Upon this record of disapproval and anxiety was superimposed the welcoming smile. She kissed Phyllis then, turning to Gordon, pecked him in an impersonal fashion as though fearing to compromise her judicial position. Gordon, to her, was the prisoner at the bar, Phyllis counsel for the defense, the family the jury and she the judge. The pouches which flanked her jaws seemed indeed to lend her a magisterial appearance.

"So this is Douglas!" she exclaimed. "Do come in and meet the family. Oh, here's Ellery now."

Followed by the three girls, Ellery Winslow, a frail little wisp of a man with white hair, a man Gordon promptly sensed, with a dry humor of his own, entered the bleak shabby living room. The two men shook hands with real cordiality. The girls were presented. Barbara, a sophomore at Grantwood, a faintly

pretty girl with blue eyes and hazel hair. She looked not in the least like Phyllis. Frances, still in high school, in coloring resembling Phyllis but completely missing her beauty, and Rosamond, a leggy girl of about fourteen, freckled and wholesome looking. She giggled, of course, but the two elder sisters surprised Gordon by their poise and dignity. Ordinarily rather careless about his dress, Phyllis had spruced him up for the occasion and surveying him in this setting with hypercritical eyes, she felt pride in the quiet distinction of his appearance. They sat down. Trivialities sufficed for conversation: their long drive, the rural charm of Greenmeadow, Phyllis's "Twilight Tales."

"Miss Griscomb is so delighted," explained Mrs. Winslow. "She subscribes to the *Springfield Union* so as to read them every day. Says she always asserted you were the best pupil she ever had in English composition. You must see her before you return."

"It's all due to Douglas," protested Phyllis. "He sold them for me."

"Phyllis tells me that you're a Whithurst man," Mrs. Winslow turned to Douglas.

"Yes, class of ninety-nine. Then I put in

a couple of years at the Michigan School of Mines. But I'm hopelessly out of touch with my college. Wandering about so much." Gordon had never quite understood the type of man who bore a college label to the end of his life. Whithurst meant little more to him than Williams or Wesleyan or Dartmouth. College lay far behind. Many college men seemed to him rather childishly college conscious. Realizing, however, that Mrs. Winslow had probably introduced the subject in the hope that he would tell her something of himself, he rambled on about his boyhood, his father's hope that he would become a doctor and his own bent toward engineering. "You see I'm not a commercial type," he explained.

Mrs. Winslow, whose face was to Phyllis an open book, registered grim disapproval. Mr. Winslow was not a "commercial type."

"I have to work at something which interests me and the business end of contracting doesn't in the least. I fear I'll never be a big operator like Mr. Keller."

Phyllis laughed nervously. "But, Douglas; you don't understand Greenmeadow standards," she explained. "You earn more now than any salaried man in this town."



Mrs. Winslow looked relieved.

"Come out and stroll round the green," suggested Mr. Winslow who had been sitting silent, yielding the helm to his wife as is the habit of prospective American fathers-in-law at such moments. "We've some fine examples of eighteenth century architecture and a few seventeenth."

"Had to smile," confided the older man slouching comfortably along in an unpressed Palm Beach suit, pulling at a wheezing briar. "Brought back the time I interviewed my wife's folks—let me see—" he paused; "twenty-five years ago. And old Ransome Edgett was a sarcastic old fellow. You're fortunate, waiting till you're well established. I married when I was only twenty-four and it was a mistake in some ways. Hampered me so I've been buried in obscure pastorates ever since. Not that I mind. I'm a good deal of a philosopher. But I'm thinking of the girls and Alice. I must admit that I'm a failure."

"Can't see it," objected Gordon. "Your standard certainly isn't financial or you'd never have entered this field. I suppose it's that of usefulness. Well, your bank account is no

measure of that. Often it's in inverse ratio." They stopped to admire a beautiful old pre-Revolutionary house sleeping peacefully in the checkered sunlight which filtered through the leaves of the gracious overarching elms.

"True enough up to a certain point," conceded Winslow as they walked on, "but a man has a duty to his family as well as to the community. I've failed in that aspect. As for my work, I'm often skeptical; not merely about myself but about the church as an institution. Few people of vigorous intelligence accept it as a spiritual guide. About ethics, I'm a fatalist. People are born with them or without them. In economics the church is hopelessly blind; has no sense of social justice. The boards of trustees are supporters of the status quo as always. What is it but a social center, a kind of sewing circle? I have my own convictions about the trend of things today. I realize that the whole system is due for a change; I hope a peaceful one. But if I preached what I believed from my pulpit I'd promptly lose my job, poor as it is."

Gordon turned in surprise. Was this Phyllis's father?

"But Phyllis, your daughters, Mrs. Winslow—they don't agree with your viewpoint? Though I suspect that I do."

"Nobody that I know of for a radius of thirty miles does. But I subscribe to some of the forward looking weeklies. The girls don't read them."

Suddenly a sense of this man's utter isolation was borne in upon Gordon. They sat down upon a stone wall and fell to exchanging outlooks. The westering sun had sunk behind the trees before Winslow pulled out his watch. "This has been great!" he exclaimed. "But watch your step with my wife. Anyway until after you've got Phyllis safely secured. She has no use for views like yours and mine. But I never would have figured that Phil would have brought a chap like you into the family. Now you're here, I say 'Welcome,'" and he wrung Gordon's hand.

After dinner, a rather dismal repast, due to Mrs. Winslow's obvious anguish over the gaucherie of Mrs. Doyle, hired for the occasion, they went for a drive, Gordon, Phyllis, Mrs. Winslow and two of the sisters. Frances remained to help Mrs. Doyle. Winslow professed his Sunday's sermon as an excuse. As

they passed the various townsfolk, Gordon noted with amusement the elder woman's graduated scale of bows—ranging from extreme cordiality in the case of Mrs. Murray, wife of the local mill-owner, to condescending patronage of a woman who sat at the wheel of a Ford. "A truck gardener's wife," she explained.

Mrs. Winslow was trying to "make out" Gordon. She was by no means ready to lend him her indorsement. He was altogether too fond of a joke and in her mind a sense of humor too often connoted a lack of serious purpose. She liked a man to be serious and solid. "Sound" was her word for the qualities of which she approved. Was Gordon sound? She questioned it. To be sure he seemed sufficiently prosperous according to Greenmeadow standards but his attitude toward his work was suspicious. The salary seemed but incidental to him. She suspected him of flightiness, the quality which had earned her thorough and unshakable disapproval of her husband.

"Such an impractical man," she often complained, "with no idea of conciliating the influential people in his church. It's all right to be independent if you can afford to be, but how



many can?" Conformity was Mrs. Winslow's ideal and here was another man who like Ellery seemed indifferent to society's shibboleths. But Phyllis, she reflected, would perhaps reform him in this aspect. She had never had occasion to criticise her eldest daughter's orthodoxy.

And Gordon too displayed another weakness which too often accompanied humor and flightiness. He certainly lacked dignity. In pulling up at a garage to secure gasoline he had fallen into such easy conversation with the person, in unspeakably dirty overalls, who attended to their wants; had even lingered to swap Ford stories with the mechanic. Nor did he seem to realize that this compromised her position as wife of the Reverend Ellery Winslow. To cap it all, later, when she had referred to an elderly gentleman who saluted her with old-fashioned formality as "Mr. Horatio Aldrich, the local banker . . . such a distinguished, dignified man," he had remarked, "What was that line about dignity? Oh yes. 'Dignity,' someone said, 'is about fifty per cent frock coat and fifty per cent whiskers.'"

"You know I can't help liking Mr. Gordon in some ways," she confided to her spouse that

evening in the sanctity of their bedroom, "but I do wish he had more sense of dignity and of his own importance."

It was a familiar phrase to Winslow but, fearing to prejudice her against the younger man by associating him with himself, he forbore to remind her.

## CHAPTER XXVII

WITH a stifled groan Gordon awoke from a nightmare of such vividness that for a moment he could not but believe in its reality. He had dreamed that, while he was tied hand and foot to his bed, Mrs. Winslow had entered, flung a sack over his face, and proceeded to stifle him. He reached under his pillow for his watch and struck a match. It was five o'clock. Breakfast he knew would not be served until seven-thirty. He arose, padded noiselessly into the bathroom and shaved. He looked longingly at the tub but fearing to awaken the silent household contented himself with a sponge bath.

By half-past five he was quietly unlocking the front door and found himself inhaling deep lungfuls of the cool morning air, odorous with the scent of phlox and honeysuckle. He detected too the pungent sweetness of mint. He turned down the village street, cross-barred at frequent intervals by the long shadows cast by the rising sun. Save for a boy delivering

papers and one lone milkman, the little town still seemed asleep. Arousing a drowsy attendant at the garage, he secured his car and drove off. He planned to enjoy a leisurely twenty-mile spin over country roads before breakfast. He had been driving perhaps a half hour when, after climbing a hill sufficiently steep to force him into second speed, he rounded a curve to find spread before him a peaceful panorama. The valley lay dreaming in the morning coolness, its lush green meadows watered by a silver stream, its eastern slopes glistening in the sunshine. Here and there a blue smoke wreath ascending vertically in the quiet air rose from the chimney of a farmhouse. He pulled up.

“Can one blame the Hudson River school for trying to include it all in a single canvas?” he reflected. Held by the beauty of the scene he sat silent for many minutes.

A rustling in the brush and suddenly there emerged a strange creature. A dog doubtless, but such a dog! A brindled, short-haired beast with a formidable gladiatorial chest which suggested English bull, its massive head a grotesque gargoyle, tracing to no known breed. It seemed mostly mouth, so much so



that he reminded Gordon not of a quadruped but of a sculpin. Heavily built throughout, the animal weighed about fifty pounds.

"Come, Jack!" called Gordon and extended his hand. The animal came sidling up with that furtively apologetic air which marks the stray. A short tail wagged propitiatingly as he reared up to place his fore paws on the running board. Gordon patted his ugly head. A huge red tongue sought to lick his hand. Reaching into the pocket of the door Gordon found a box of biscuit, the remnant of one of his picnic lunches with Phyllis. One by one he fed them to the animal who gulped them ravenously. In his exuberance it seemed that he would squirm out of his skin.

"Poor beast," thought Gordon; "someone must have revolted at seeing that face constantly and turned him out. Really he's so ugly he's a curiosity, a kind of Jo-jo of dogs."

The box consumed, he started the car and drove off. But his friend was not to be so lightly abandoned. He trotted along behind the car, quickening his pace as the machine gained impetus. Realizing finally the hopelessness of the race, he gathered all his energy into one desperate burst of speed which

brought him alongside. He leapt upon the running board, balanced precariously for a moment and then fell off. Gordon sighed and pulled up.

"Sentimentalist!" he ejaculated disgustedly. "What a destiny—to own that dog or whatever it is."

The beast, hope reawakened by the car's halt, ambled up. Gordon opened the front door, he leapt in and up upon the seat. Business of joyous reunion. With difficulty Gordon kept the creature's tongue from his face. Finally he quieted down and sat sedately on his haunches beside his benefactor. And there he still sat when his new owner drove up before the Winslows'. Mrs. Winslow and the girls were fussing about the rosebushes in front of the house. Shrieks of horror as the full impact of the dog's gorgon-like countenance was experienced.

"Very rare and valuable animal," Gordon assured them proudly. "Tasmanian ape dog. Used for hunting apes in the mountains. His kennel name is Champion Masterpiece the Second, but he answers to Caliban." The dog squirmed with delight as the women timorously approached.

"Mongolian mongrel!" asserted Phyllis with decision. "Where did you get him, and why?"

Gordon confessed. "He'll make a good watch dog about the quarry," he suggested hopefully, anxious to justify his acquisition on some practical grounds. "Let's feed him," and he led the dog around to the back door. Proper dog meat being lacking he made out a meal on dog biscuit soaked in milk purchased by his master as he came through the town.

Winslow, père, appeared in the midst of the scene. "Very unique animal," he asserted. "And that is the only correct way to secure a dog. If a dog figures in your destiny he'll find you and you cannot escape. To buy a dog is an outrage against nature and the great scheme of things. It is like buying a wife or a child."

"But this dog looks so plebeian," Mrs. Winslow's offering.

"No, this dog is like genius, entirely beyond the range of such words as patrician or plebeian. He transcends all usual terms. He is simply himself; perhaps an atavistic survival of some primitive dog, a Neanderthal dog, I suspect. Douglas says he is Tasmanian.



That supports my theory for it is a fact that Australasia preserves a fauna infinitely more ancient than that of the other continents . . . the duck bill for example, and the kangaroo."

Caliban absorbed in his breakfast which he devoured with strange noises seemed insensitive to the scientific discussion of his origin.

"I think he's a horrible looking brute," was Phyllis's conclusion delivered with an air of closing the discussion. Mrs. Winslow, more tactful, suggested that though quite obviously not a house dog, Caliban would doubtless make a good quarry dog. Secretly the episode, though slight, confirmed her in her opinion of Gordon's dangerous unconventionality. But Caliban heaving a sigh of content at having established contact even though transitory with a master and a meal, lay down to sleep on the kitchen stoop. The family strolled in to its own breakfast.

The day passed without untoward incident. Gordon accompanied by Phyllis and Rosamond rolled lazily along country roads in the morning. The afternoon was consumed by calls upon family friends, ancient gentlewomen, parishioners of Mr. Winslow's. Mrs. Winslow, Phyllis and Gordon comprised the



party. Gordon withstood the ordeal courageously but was visibly flagging by dinner time. A stroll in the evening alone with Phyllis revived him.

"You poor boy," she said commiseratingly. "It's very trying, I realize. But it's inevitable. If you had a family and I were on trial before them I'd be in still worse case. Women are merciless to one another. You're fortunate after all in their approval. Father says he has acquired a son at last. He was always disappointed that not one of us proved to be a boy. Anyway it's almost over. By to-morrow afternoon we'll be on the road to Bellport."

"It isn't that," protested Gordon, "not the appraisal part of it. I don't know what it is, but I can't breathe. It's something in the mental atmosphere hereabouts. It oppresses me. I'm too relaxed and careless a soul for this conventional community."

Phyllis looked at him speculatively. They were seated on a boulder by a quiet stream. She intended gradually to curb some of Gordon's objectionable tendencies once they were securely wedded. Democracy was all right in theory but after all there were such things as standards to be maintained, taboos to be ob-

served. And Gordon either scorned them or was utterly impervious to their influence; she was not sure which.

Now that matter of Caliban who lay at their feet. Gordon could easily have afforded a pedigreed animal, one which would have implied a certain discernment, a feeling for the niceties of life, a dog whose lineage could be casually referred to as distinguished, suggesting a similar genealogy for its owners. Instead of which—Caliban—the living and tangible evidence of some illicit and disgraceful union.

“You sound like father,” she finally replied. “I wonder if you men wouldn’t revert to savagery if it weren’t for us women? It is we who conserve the standards that the race has wrested from barbarism.”

“But it is an open question,” suggested Gordon, “how much of what has been wrested from barbarism could not better have been dispensed with. Caste and ostentation and snobbery: all those chilling ideas which make man and woman ignoble; whether or not barbarians suffered from them, it is time that civilization scrapped them.”

Phyllis cleverly shifted the conversation to

an innocuous theme offering no opportunity for dispute. For the point Gordon had raised she realized from past experience was in their case controversial. She completely disagreed with him and was tactful enough to realize the futility of discussion. Gradually both succumbed to the magic of the hour and place, and Phyllis's lips were warm from his kisses when they returned to the house.

"Well, now you know all Greenmeadow, or at least all Greenmeadow knows you." Phyllis settled back comfortably in her seat; they were just outside the town bound for Bellport.

"Well, it's over," Gordon heaved a sigh of relief, "and I'm ahead of the game one perfectly good family." A heavy paw fell upon his shoulder followed by a frantic lick at his ear. "Oh yes, and, item . . . one dog . . . or whatever it is, with a perfectly good appetite."

Phyllis stiffened. "Douglas, I do hope you get rid of him promptly. He is so utterly impossible with that absurd grinning face."

"*Le chien qui rit*," suggested Gordon. "Who knows what pathos, what tragedy, may lie concealed behind that clownish countenance?"

"Goat!" exclaimed Phyllis.

PART THREE  
THE MILLS OF THE GODS





## CHAPTER XXVIII

GORDON was seated alone in his office one morning the week following his return from Greenmeadow. The morning had dawned stifflingly hot but an east wind springing up at about ten o'clock swept gratefully through the little room. He looked up inquiringly from his Trautwine as two men entered.

"Mr. Gordon? Douglas Gordon, superintendent of this plant?" inquired one, a rather fattish bald-headed man with keen gray eyes.

Gordon nodded and removed his feet from the lower desk drawer which he had opened to serve as a rest. At the same time, laying down his black-bound volume, he filled and lighted his pipe. "What firm do you gentlemen represent?" he inquired pleasantly.

"My name is Cummings and this is Mr. Halliday. We represent the United States secret service and have come to place you under arrest, Mr. Gordon, for falsifying the weight returns on this job. Here is the warrant." He tossed the document upon the

desk His manner was not dramatic, was in fact curiously impersonal and business-like. He might have been a tax collector. His companion, Halliday, a lean sandy-haired man with pale blue eyes watched Gordon closely as though interested in observing his reactions.

Gordon expelled a cloud of smoke, picked up the document and read it carefully.

"If this is one of Captain Tucker's practical jokes," he replied at last, "it has certainly been elaborately worked up. If it isn't a joke, I haven't the slightest idea regarding the *modus operandi*. Where do we go from here?" His manner was serious but perfectly calm.

"It is no joke, Mr. Gordon." Cummings eyed him keenly and he drew back his coat to reveal his badge. "We know nothing of the details, have had no contact with working up the case. Our orders are to make the arrest, place you in custody in Hereford where you'll be arraigned. The thing for you to do is to arrange for a lawyer and for bail. Later the grand jury, if the charge is sustained, renders an indictment and you are tried before a federal court."

"Hello, Captain, come in," Gordon sang out to Tucker who was passing the door.

“Mr. Cummings and Mr. Halliday—Captain Tucker, in charge of our floating stock. Sit down, Captain. It may be a long time before you have a friendly chat with me again. These gentlemen are secret service men, and they’ve just placed me under arrest for falsifying the weight returns.”

Captain Tucker slumped heavily into a chair. “You ain’t kiddin’, parson?” he urged earnestly.

“There’s the warrant and these men have their credentials.”

The old man turned to the officers. “Got one for me?” he inquired. “For if that man ever falsified any weight returns I must have too; and probl’y the justices of the supreme court.”

“Mr. Cummings and Mr. Halliday tell me that they know nothing about the details, Captain,” interrupted Gordon who feared that Tucker in his choler might start a row. “They’ve got no more to do with this charge than you have. But I’d better get hold of Keller.” He picked up the telephone and in a few minutes had the Tudor Arms.

“Mr. Keller went to New York this morning.” That was what came over the wire.



"Well . . . let's start the machinery," he said as he replaced the receiver. "I'm at your service, gentlemen."

"I'm coming too," asserted Captain Tucker belligerently. "They may not let me in the cell but I'm going to be on hand to do what I can."

The four men descended the stairs and entered the automobile which had brought the emissaries of justice.

"Tell O'Hearn we've gone to Hereford. Back to-morrow—maybe this afternoon." Tucker yelled the instructions to a passing walking boss.

"Maybe," added Gordon quietly.

"Parson, it looks to me as though somebody had falsified the weights all right," said Tucker, "and you're selected as the scapegoat. You indorse the sheet as O. K. every month, don't you?"

"Sure, but the figures have been accurate, I'll swear to that." They spoke with complete freedom before the two officers who listened attentively.

"Yes, but they may have been doped after they left your hands."

"But how could they figure I had a motive?"

Oh . . . I see. . . . I get a salary plus a bonus on the tonnage dumped. They figure I doped them to increase my bonus cheque. But my cheque has always corresponded to the figures I O. K.'d."

"But can you prove it? You've cashed those cheques and they're back in the main office in New York."

"Well, I can get them from there, I suppose."

"But *can* you? Parson, this is deep stuff. Denton's duplicate report must have been doped too. I wonder where he is? I haven't seen him to-day. You've been framed and by parties that are mighty close to you. Don't count on anybody is my advice. Somebody or some gang of somebodies has been pulling some crooked work and to avoid arrest has picked you as the fall guy. I told you long ago that I smelled a rat."

"And I used to kid you for being an alarmist." Gordon laughed. "We've got all the elements for a crook melodrama, but I never thought I'd figure in so prominent a rôle."

"Now don't be too cheerful," warned Tucker. "Many a man as innocent as you has been railroaded to the pen by perjured evi-

dence. I want you to have a realizing sense of what you're facing."

"Don't you think for a minute that I don't. But I may as well be cheerful until they spring the drop."

Despite his attempts at judicial severity Cummings grinned. In all his experience he had never seen a guilty man put up so convincing a bluff. He wondered if the old man were an accomplice. They discussed the case as thoroughly as possible, groping as they were in utter blindness, until they pulled up shortly before noon in front of the Court House.

It was nearly four o'clock when Gordon and Captain Tucker emerged from the building, Gordon being for the present at least at liberty.

Upon entering they had been greeted by a dapper, fidgety little man with thin graying hair, a close-cropped moustache and a nervous uneasy manner, who had introduced himself as Randolph Hutchins, an attorney from New York, representing the Keller Construction Company in securing bail for its employee. "I don't know much about this business," he admitted. "Mr. Wellington told me two days ago that some difficulty had developed about



weight returns, that you might be placed under arrest and that I was to come on to give surety. I've got all the papers ready. It's unlikely that the judge will fix your bail at more than \$20,000 and I'm prepared to cover it."

Gordon found it impossible to get past the opaque veil of his stony eyes.

"So Wellington had inside information," commented Captain Tucker meaningly. "Queer he didn't notify Mr. Gordon."

"Now how about counsel?" inquired Hutchins ignoring the captain's remark. "If an indictment is returned you'll want someone to represent you. We have specialized in the criminal branches: Hutchins, Lockwood and Brown." He stopped, waiting for Gordon to speak.

Captain Tucker frowned and shook his head almost imperceptibly.

"I think I'll make no definite decision today. This is too serious a matter for snapshot judgment."

"Quite right. There's no great rush. You'll want to consult Mr. Keller and Mr. Wellington anyway. I think they'll support my suggestion. In fact Mr. Wellington re-



quested me to offer our services. But you can let me hear later."

The three men entered Judge Elwood's chambers where they found the judge, a frail little bushy-eyebrowed old man who looked somehow as though he were probably a reader of Charles Lamb, Pepys' Diary and other literature of an earlier age, in conversation with the federal district attorney. The whole transaction was conducted with an impersonal business-like air; as though it were a real estate deal or some similarly everyday affair.

The judge and Chandler Gifford, representing the government, seemed to regard Gordon much to his surprise without condemnation. He had imagined that a man accused as he was of a serious crime would be eyed askance particularly by men who bore the relation to him of these two. He did not realize that their backgrounds of legal practice had first, rendered them peculiarly open-minded until at least a conviction had been secured, and second, reduced all individuals enmeshed in the law's technicalities to the position of impersonal pawns, the conviction or acquittal of whom depended almost entirely upon the relative abilities of their attorneys. Gifford,

a square-jawed man in eyeglasses who was cursed with a particularly recalcitrant cowlick was inclined to warm into a sort of advisory friendliness as he perceived Gordon's complete and bewildered ignorance of the exigencies of the situation. Nor did he object to aiding Hutchins to the extent of posting him on the personnel and procedure of the local courts.

"Denton will be indicted on separate counts," he explained which was the first that Gordon knew of the inspector's fate. Bail was fixed at \$15,000. Hutchins's credentials and sureties proved to be satisfactory and after being instructed to appear for a hearing two weeks later, the three men left. Hutchins bade them a hurried good-bye on the court house steps, announcing that he had barely time to catch a train for Boston which would connect him with the New York limited.

"I'll see you in New York in a day or two no doubt," said Gordon. "I want to get to the bottom of this."

"I'm glad he's out of the way." The captain stopped to light a cigar. "Now we can talk. We know a good deal more than we did."

"But not so much as we ought to. So the

company knew what was brewing. Why is Wellington so thoughtful about bailing me out?"

Tucker laughed sarcastically. "Why indeed? Now, Parson, I'll tell you my theory and this time you won't laugh. Denton's crooked and so is Wellington and maybe John B. Keller, though that's a terrible hard thing for me to say. The weight returns have been doped sure enough. Wellington or somebody tested us out last summer to see whether we'd stand in with 'em. And they found us both honest. Remember that fellow Hubbard—and my experience with Ed Cook up at Bennett's spar yard?"

Gordon nodded.

"Well, the government got wise; though not until the Keller Construction Company had probably cleaned up a half million or so in crooked money. In the meantime the crooks, figuring all along that there was a chance they'd get caught, have doped out a plan of passing the buck in case of trouble. There wasn't a chance for Denton. He's sure to be convicted, but the situation required someone to act as a scapegoat for the company and you're elected.



“You’ll find that you’re up against the finest bunch of perjured testimony and faked evidence that a fellow ever faced. They wouldn’t hesitate at forgery or any other crime. And it’s ten to one that Wellington has arranged with this Hutchins fellow to lose your case for you if you fight. But what Wellington don’t know is this. I’m an old man . . . and I’m losing my taste for booze anyway . . . and if they railroad you to the pen I’ll strangle that damned rotten filthy black-hearted scoundrel from Hell with my own bare hands if it’s the last damned thing I do on this earth.”

“Here now, Captain, calm down.” The veins stood out on the captain’s temples, his face was scarlet and he looked as though he might have a stroke of apoplexy as he stood there on the sidewalk. “Keep cool and we’ll beat this frame-up. For one thing, what jury is going to believe that the company didn’t knowingly profit by a deal that, even if I’d got the money, would have paid me only a dime to their dollar?”

“But the company ain’t been indicted. It’s you and Denton. The jury may suspect the company but that won’t help you. And re-



member, Denton will probably swear that you and him were the only two involved. Well, here's the Bellport trolley. Let's go home."

The two men threshed out the situation from every angle as the open car sped through fragrant uplands and skirted shadowed coves. To Gordon there was about the entire affair a fantastically unreal quality. He could not as yet adjust himself to it. It seemed as though he must be laboring under an hypnosis and that the spell might momentarily lift. Honesty was as natural to him as breathing, so much so that he always observed theft with a certain shock of surprise and incredulity.

They dropped off at the quarry to find it closed down for the night, secured Gordon's machine and drove home. Gordon wondered as he mounted the steps whether Phyllis and Mrs. Hale had heard any rumors of the day's events. He must attempt to minimize their significance in explaining the situation to the women.

It was not until after dinner that he told Phyllis.

"But, Douglas . . . it's too utterly preposterous! To think of my fiancé's being ac-

cused of a crime, and such a crime. I can't credit it!"

"You'll have to credit it when you see the morning papers," replied Gordon.

They were seated on the steps of an old house, unoccupied this season, which overlooked the sea. The night wind, drifting ghostily from the water, fanned their cheeks with its damp breath.

"What will Mother say . . . and the girls . . . and Mrs. Murray and Mr. Aldrich? Isn't it simply too frightful? I can't quite adjust myself to it. I didn't know such things happened. Well, I don't care what they say. I'll stick by you."

Gordon regarded her curiously. He hadn't thought very much about Phyllis's relation to this event; had been too occupied pondering its intricacies. So Phyllis seemed to assume that there was an alternative. Some girls might not have stuck by him, or so she implied. He was thinking, trying to see the whole situation from Phyllis's viewpoint.

"Well, you know," he remarked after a silence, "you don't want to be bound to a man who's wearing stripes in the penitentiary."

That's not a pleasant prospect for the Reverend Ellery Winslow's daughter. Your mother has not yet finally announced our engagement. Suppose we just cancel it till we see what happens." Gordon's voice sounded strained and unnatural. Suddenly the full significance of his predicament had been borne in upon him. That future which had seemed so secure, so serene twelve hours ago, a future which always presented to him one constantly recurring picture: a booklined room, a lamp, and seated opposite him, her face softened by the mellow light, her eyes tender with love, the woman of his choice . . . how ruthlessly had it been shattered. What had seemed so real had proved to be as insubstantial as a cobweb, and as easily as a cobweb is destroyed by a stroke of a stick, so had his dream been annihilated.

"Of course we won't cancel anything," she protested, "but it might be best to delay the announcement. I don't know. . . . I'll have to consult Mother."

"Proper procedure when one's daughter proves to be engaged to a convict. That will be a staggerer for her," suggested Gordon. "Might involve a social setback. Well, I'm



not in jail yet and I'll fight every step of the way. Though so far as that goes many a better man has been there." Despite Gordon's efforts to be jocular about the matter, their evening was gloomy. Phyllis, it seemed to him, appeared to be almost as disturbed about the effect of the news in Greenmeadow's elect circles as about any other factor.

"Why do you let that bother you?" Gordon inquired with a hint of irritation. "Any intelligent person who knows us must know that it is incredible that I could be guilty of such a crime. Look at dear old Mrs. Hale. Demands to act as surety for my bail. And anyone who knows you must know that you couldn't be engaged to a thief. What do we care about the rest of the world? I have never given a thought to the world's estimate of me and now I'm thankful I'm built that way. I'd be in a bad way if I worried about my reputation. That's merely a form of moral cowardice, the herd instinct."

"Douglas, you are so independent. People have to conform to get along in this world. It's because almost everyone's progress depends upon others' opinions of them. Look at Father. He'd always get into arguments at



the conferences so they've always kept him in obscure pastorates."

Gordon shook his head stubbornly. "You'll have to take me as I am, Phyllis. My attitude is not rebellious nor antagonistic. I think the world is all right but I ignore a good many of its standards—that's all. I've never been politic. If I tried to be I'd fizzle it. And though I've suddenly come a cropper, you can't ascribe it to any fault in me. It has just happened—like a stroke of lightning. However, it's a mighty difficult thing to make a crooked frame-up fool-proof in every detail. I expect to be able to riddle the evidence which has been concocted and to secure an acquittal. I leave for New York in the morning to see Keller and Wellington and to arrange for counsel. When I come back I'll know a lot more."

But Phyllis refused to be cheered. For too many years had she been subject to the influence of her mother, a woman who was always prepared for the worst and when it didn't occur felt it to be only a reprieve—that sooner or later the blow would descend.

It was with eyes welling with tears that she kissed him good night at her door.

## CHAPTER XXIX

As Gordon boarded the train for New York the next morning he picked up the Hereford paper from the station news stand. On the front page was a brief item covering his arrest. He hoped that Phyllis, who had accompanied him to the train and whose labored attempt to be cheerful was most depressing, would not see it. The reporter evidently had been unable to secure detailed information. Denton's name did not appear, which tended to confirm his impression that the inspector had not yet been apprehended. He wondered what would develop in the interview which lay before him and for a moment regretted that he had not acceded to Captain Tucker's demand when the wired summons arrived that he be permitted to accompany him.

"Ought to have a witness, Parson," Tucker had urged. "And as for this job of mine, if the company is trying to put something over on you, I wouldn't work for them anyway."

But Gordon in the older man's interests had

vetoed the suggestion. It seemed clear too that he would be dealing with men altogether too shrewd to commit themselves before witnesses. The best thing to do was to feel out the situation, ascertain the attitude of those involved, and then proceed as circumstances dictated. He felt certain that Keller, whatever the exigencies of the case forced him to do, felt kindly toward him. Wellington, so far as he knew, cherished no animus but would not hesitate, he felt confident, to sacrifice him or anyone else who stood in the way of his own safety.

As the train, an express to Boston, flashed through Jasmine, a blithe garden of carefree pleasure sparkling in the morning sun, he thought of Patricia and of what her reaction would be to these fantastic events. Strangely he had thought of her the previous day, had felt the need of consulting her, before the thought of Phyllis had occurred to him in the same connection.

“John B. will find Pat a handful in this business,” he reflected. “She will never placidly acquiesce in the plan which I suspect has been outlined.” That Patricia would for a moment question his integrity he knew to be



inconceivable. Despite the menace of his own problem, he found it in his heart to pity the Kellers and their acceptance of standards which, to maintain, resulted in steps so desperate. Gordon was capable of flaming indignation at another's wrongs. Yet oddly enough he felt no anger about this case. It seemed clear to him that everyone involved was being forced by inexorable destiny to take each successive step. Once committed to a dishonest policy it was clear, for example, that John Keller must display no scruples in defending himself, for if he went down his wife and children must pay the penalty with him. No, the drama must unfold as written and the actors assume the rôles assigned them. He began casting about in his mind for an attorney to defend him but concluded finally that it was best to take no steps until he knew more definitely the position of Keller and Wellington.

It was nearly six o'clock when his train pulled into the Grand Central. Further developments must await the morning. After dinner he strolled into one of the elaborate Broadway moving picture houses and watched the unfolding of an intricate plot involving the



nefarious activities of a dishonest bank cashier who shifted the blame for a shortage to the shoulders of a young paying teller. But the story failed to hold his attention. His own problems were too pressing.

Returning to his hotel, he slept soundly and awoke in the morning, a prey to mingled emotions. Intense curiosity was perhaps the dominant one, coupled with a certain pugnacious resolution to wrest from his principals every possible admission which might help him in building his own defense. At nine-thirty he stepped out of the elevator on the seventeenth floor of the building which housed the Keller Construction Company's offices. He turned the knob with decision and a moment later was ushered into John Keller's private office, a fairly large, plainly yet richly furnished room, which commanded a view of Bryant Park.

"Hello, Gordon. Sit down here." Keller arose from his desk and fussed with a comfortable arm chair which was placed nearby facing the light. Wellington who sat beside Keller's desk, facing him, contented himself with a cheerful nod. Gordon as he approached kept his hands in his pockets. He preferred not to shake hands, not to have the

conversation salved with saponaceous friendliness. He accepted a cigar from Keller, lighted it and sat awaiting developments.

Wellington spoke first. "Well," he observed, "Hutchins reports that he fixed things up for you all right, the bail I mean."

"Obviously. Else I wouldn't be here. But what's the bail for? That's what I came to find out."

Wellington drew a long breath while Keller looked intently at the end of his cigar. He found difficulty evidently in meeting Gordon's eye.

"Gordon, there's hell to pay. The government asserts that the weights have been doped for some months past on the Bellport job. They demand restitution from us which of course we'll have to make though it's difficult to arrive at the exact figure, and they will to-day arrest Denton whose doped returns corresponded to the sheet which the company renders, the sheet I mean which you indorsed monthly and mailed to us for submission to Washington.

"Now we've been in touch with Denton and it seems that he will appear as a witness against you and testify to the fact that this was a

deal between you two. Later he will be tried and we understand that he will plead guilty. Of course, we don't believe you're guilty or anything of the sort." Wellington spoke hurriedly as though fearing an interruption from his listener. "But there's a mass of evidence which would make it look so. So here's our proposition. You're almost certain to be convicted anyway so, if you'll just plead guilty, we'll put into the hands of any person you may name fifty thousand dollars in greenbacks to be paid to you the day you say 'Guilty,' and we'll also sign a contract guaranteeing you a job if you want it after you get out for ten years at ten thousand dollars a year. Fifty thousand dollars at seven per cent brings in an income of thirty-five hundred dollars a year. So there you'll be, fixed for life, Gordon, with never another worry." Wellington sought to assume an air of patronizing benevolence, as though he were conferring a great favor.

This speech of Wellington's was, Gordon realized, his cue for a declamatory outburst of injured innocence. Any man similarly placed in the usual novel or play would have thus reacted. And it is true no doubt that the vast majority of people do seek to play up to



the stock conceptions of the proper procedure in certain circumstances. In actual life, however, a person deeply wronged may accept the disclosure with philosophic calm and yet fly into a rage because after a night devoted to fighting mosquitoes he finds his toast burned at breakfast. An explosion of rage is as a rule traceable to overwrought nerves rather than to an actual justification.

Gordon sat surveying Wellington coolly, reflecting that these men must feel none too secure else they would not have made what was from their viewpoint so liberal an offer. Then he shifted his glance to Keller who gazed out of the window to avoid meeting his eyes. There was something at once comic and pathetic about the uneasy expression on the elder man's red beefy face. He had, as a matter of fact, always valued Gordon's respect and it was a blow to his vanity to lose it. From his knowledge of Gordon he had deemed Wellington's preposterous proposal a waste of time but had acceded to his partner's plan because, with storm clouds hovering, he considered it good policy to avoid friction.

"Wellington, I credited you with keener perceptions." Gordon spoke calmly but with



a certain decision which left no doubt as to his attitude. "This proposition indicts your intelligence rather than my character. You two have evidently been swindling the government in collusion with Denton and you've bribed him to implicate me. I'll fight this to the last ditch and before I'm through I'll not only be vindicated but I'll have you and Keller here behind the bars on so many counts that you'll never get out. You've got altogether too intricate a problem on your hands, a case involving forgery, perjury and I don't know how many other offenses. Denton can never stand up under a cross examination and I doubt if you can with a story like this.

"Also I'll have a civil case against you that will cost you a good deal more than fifty thousand dollars. What you men had better do is to cut out the melodrama and have this charge against me dropped. The government must be proceeding on fake evidence supplied by you. Make complete restitution and take your medicine. You'll get off easier in the long run."

Keller, who had been listening attentively, stirred uneasily in his chair. It did seem absurd to seek to involve Gordon. Everything

about him, his clear eye and frank expression so palpably bespoke transparent honesty. And he was sincerely fond of the man. Never in his life which had held many questionable transactions had he had to take a step which went so against the grain. But his hands were tied and he could see no other solution to this menacing problem. He realized that Gordon's presentation was reasonable but he also knew that Gordon had little conception of the power of money and the force of cunning in a case of this sort.

It was true that the Keller Construction Company would have to make restitution for the sums wrongly secured from the time the government had ascertained that the weights had been manipulated. But there remained a large sum paid prior to this time and that would go a long way in fixing whatever judges and other government officials proved to be venal. Keller, from the very nature of his business, his whole income being derived from the River and Harbor appropriation, had had to study the intricacies of politics. He knew that generally speaking political life attracted men whose ethics were sub-normal, that federal judgeships were political plums, and that in

the very nature of things a man of Gordon's direct simplicity would be helpless once entrapped in the labyrinth of the law. Even if Gordon fought bitterly, he would see that he got on his feet after serving his term. There was not a man in his employ whom he would not have preferred to sacrifice. Gordon as superintendent, paid a bonus on tonnage shipped and in constant contact with Denton, was, however, the logical scapegoat. Someone must be the scapegoat. Certainly John B. Keller could not be expected to wear stripes. He had his family to think about, his wife's position, Patricia's marriage, Clifford's future. He regretted most bitterly now this disclosure had come, that he had not been content with his legitimate profit. But there again he had he felt been the victim of circumstances. The Bellport job had been secured at too low a price. Had he not accepted Wellington's suggestion of corrupting Denton, he might now be bankrupt.

Wellington cleared his throat. "There's our proposition," he said firmly. "You can think it over for a week if you want to. If you turn it down, of course you'll have to find



surety elsewhere. You can't expect us to attend to your bail if you're fighting us."

Something about his self-righteous air impressed Gordon as being intensely amusing. He began to laugh, and Keller could not repress a smile.

"Wellington, you're rich," exclaimed Gordon. "I really believe that you believe I'm an unreasonable and ungrateful sort of chap to refuse your generous offer. I'll arrange for transferring the surety, if I find it convenient, as soon as I get back to Bellport. But in the meantime," his voice held a menacing note, "no funny business about it, or you'll answer to me personally."

Wellington remained uncomfortably silent. He had felt Gordon's hands on his throat once. The episode still rankled; in fact, explained in great measure his willingness to brand Gordon a criminal.

"Now, gentlemen, I'll be rather busy for awhile." Gordon arose. "My connection with the Keller Construction Company ends to-day. Kindly figure out my cheque and mail it to the 'Engineers.' Good day," and he walked briskly out.



"And that's that," said Keller as the door closed.

"Well, we had to try it on him," defended Wellington. "No harm is done." But his bearing as he entered his own office which adjoined Keller's was not confident. He realized that many contingencies might arise if Gordon's case were skilfully fought, which would incriminate him. He had, to be sure, covered every detail which could be foreseen. The Keller Construction Company's books showed entries of bonus cheques paid to Gordon which corresponded to the sums due him figured upon the basis of the manipulated weight sheets. It was true that the cheques actually paid him agreed with the honestly rendered returns which he had forwarded to New York but these cancelled cheques were safely accounted for and forged versions would be introduced as evidence. It had been a simple matter to have rubber stamps made corresponding to the indorsements of the various banks through which they had passed and to forge Gordon's indorsement on the backs required merely some clever pen work.

He was nervous, however, about Denton. The inspector seeing the hopelessness of an

acquittal had made up his mind to face the music. He saw that to implicate the company would gain him nothing while to protect it had been made worth his while. He was to receive fifty thousand dollars for testifying against Gordon, and he figured that by thus turning state's evidence his sentence would be lightened. Wellington feared Denton's dullness. A distinctly stupid man, it was a question whether or not a penetrating cross-examination might not trip him up.

## CHAPTER XXX

GORDON's first step, obviously, was to secure a lawyer. As he walked up Fifth Avenue, he mentally reviewed his list of friends and acquaintances. He did not personally know one lawyer. Never a mixer in the usual sense of the word, his acquaintance was not wide and most of the men he knew in New York were in engineering and technical circles. He had not the remotest idea of the cost of defending a criminal charge like this one. He thought it likely that it would completely strip him of his modest accumulations which totalled only some ten or eleven thousand dollars. And if convicted, which seemed not impossible, he would after serving his term have to change his name, emigrate to some distant point and start life over. As he stood by one of the lions in front of the library, gazing absently at the nondescript summer crowd which surged languidly past in the hot July sun, he was poignantly assailed with a sense of the unreality of this experience. It was the sort of

thing which might happen to a man in a book. Vainly he groped for a method of procedure. A poor lawyer, he knew, could botch the best case in the world, a good one secure a verdict in the face of insuperable odds.

“What a damnable nuisance, this whole ridiculous business!” he suddenly exclaimed aloud, and a wave of anger swept him. “That pudgy dolt, Wellington; too stupid to be crooked successfully, he fumbles it and puts me in this pickle. Damn him! . . . I’ll go back and at least have the satisfaction of beating him up.” He strode swiftly back to the building, anxious to confront his antagonist ere his choler cooled. Energized by his irritation he would have tackled both men with supreme confidence.

“Mr. Wellington left shortly after you did, Mr. Gordon.” Miss Cramer, the girl at the switchboard, smiled sweetly. She liked Gordon who had often stopped to exchange a few words with her.

He turned away in disgust and mopping his brow, moist from his heightened temperature, pressed the elevator button. At the corner he picked up a Home Edition of a daily. A headline caught his eye—“Burton to Defend



Unions in Injunction Case.” Gordon stopped short. “I’ll ask Burton to suggest someone,” he thought. Burton was a celebrated attorney who had made a fortune in the practice of his profession and who now gave most of his time to various radical and liberal causes which, often too poor to afford competent counsel, found in this altruistic lawyer a valuable champion. Gordon had met him one evening the previous winter at a liberal forum. He had little idea that Burton would recall him but he had faith in the man, in his character and his judgment. A telephone book gave him the required address and he was quickly whirled down-town to Burton’s office.

Burton, a tall, lean, countrified looking man with lantern jaws, keen gray eyes, a large nose and a humorous twist to his mouth, was seated at his desk, a law book in his hand, his long legs wound about the rungs of an adjoining chair in an intricate and indecipherable fashion. After a minute he recalled his visitor.

“Yes, I remember. You were telling me about labor and living conditions in a Nevada mining camp. Sit down.” With surprising dexterity he extricated his legs from the vacant chair with one motion.

Gordon began to tell his story, rather haltingly at first. "You know," he interjected, "I really begin to feel like a criminal. If this continues long enough I may confess to everything I'm charged with."

Burton laughed. "Go on," he urged, "this thing sounds like a movie."

Finally Gordon concluded. "So there's the whole story. I've come to you to recommend a good criminal lawyer to defend me."

"Well, I'll be damned," ejaculated the lawyer, still engrossed by Gordon's narrative. "Some nerve, eh? They get the swag and you hold the bag!" His keen glance appraised Gordon shrewdly seeking to evaluate his story. He seemed satisfied. "So you want a good lawyer? You'll need one. Those birds are going to use money wherever it will do the most good. Well, why don't you let *me* defend you? I'm average good, they say, and I'd sort of enjoy cross-examining some of the witnesses in this case. I practised for years in the criminal courts in the old days. Also I take it you haven't got a whole lot to spend and I can afford to handle it for a nominal sum. It's a kind of a public service as I see it, fighting a gang of that kidney."

Gordon had hoped for no such happy solution to this pressing problem. "I'd rather you defended me than anyone in the United States," he exclaimed.

For an hour they discussed the technicalities of the case. "A great deal hinges on your bonus cheques," Burton explained. "Doubtless they have faked cheques ready to introduce and probably they've destroyed the genuine cheques which you cashed. But we should leave no stone unturned and we'd better get into their offices to-night and go through the bookkeeper's records."

"I think I have a key." Gordon produced a key ring from his pocket. "Yes, and the night elevator man knows me. We'll have no difficulty." They parted, agreeing to meet at the entrance of the office building at nine o'clock.

"Yes, I thought so." Burton snapped the elastic back on to a bundle of cancelled cheques. "In each month there's a break in the sequence of numbers. That represents your cheque. Doubtless they've doped all their records to correspond."

He looked longingly at the locked safe which held the books.

“Well, we may be able to prove something from your own entries of deposits in the Bellport bank. You can work that up when you get back there.”

He carefully replaced the cheques, extinguished the light and they went out.



## CHAPTER XXXI

GORDON returned to Bellport to find that Phyllis had gone home "for a few days." Mrs. Hale told him. He wrote her briefly the result of his New York trip and then drove out to the quarry. He realized from the interested and in most cases sympathetic glances of the men that his arrest had become common property. He felt unpleasantly conspicuous and reflected that were he actually guilty he could hardly feel more uncomfortable. In the office were O'Hearn and Captain Tucker. O'Hearn, who concealed beneath a hearty humorous manner an arbitrary and jealous nature, greeted him coolly.

"Can't blame him," thought Gordon. "He's got his job to consider, and the little O'Hearns."

Captain Tucker remarking bluntly, "Well, Jerry, the parson and me have got something to talk over," led the way to the tug which lay deserted at the dock. "Now tell me the whole

story, parson." Gordon narrated his New York experiences in detail.

"Just as I thought," the captain nodded with melancholy satisfaction. "Well, the skunks will get my resignation to-morrow. I wouldn't take another dollar o' their dirty money. I've no one dependent on me. I've got nearly ten thousand in the bank and every dollar is yours to fight this thing with. No, don't argue with me. I'd be afraid to stay, so far as that goes. Might just as likely hang something on me. It don't surprise me about Wellington but I never did think Keller would pull a deal like this. Not that he leans over backward but this is pretty damned raw." Savagely he bit off the end of a cigar. "Regan and Edwards have been after me for years. I'll tie up with them."

As they walked up the pier, Tony Cellini came scuttling down from the top of the quarry. "Meester Gordona," he cried excitedly. "*Madre di Dios!* I reada da paper. All bout 'resta. You gooda man; Tony know. All lies, all wat you call . . ." he hesitated, "wat you call frama!"

"Frame up, Tony," interjected Tucker good-naturedly.

“Si, si . . . frama. Badda man maka frama. Muss be. Meester Gordona ev’body know he gooda man. Crooks maka frama!” he gesticulated wildly. “All say so our house. Now bouta da bail. I gotta da mon and Giuseppe Pucci and Giovanni Carillo and Paolo Libonati—all a togeda—put uppa da mon.”

Gordon was dumbfounded. It was true that he had lived very close to the men, had induced the company to raise the wage scale, cut the hours and improve the living conditions in the dormitories. But this tribute was totally unexpected. Thoroughly an Anglo-Saxon in his traditions, he felt hopelessly disgraced to find his voice husky as he explained to Tony that the bail had been covered by his lawyer.

Tony seemed disappointed. “Any time, allatime,” he urged. Gordon thanked him gratefully and they walked on. With no work to do he felt lost, a stray dog. Arriving home in the middle of the afternoon, he found Patricia’s car before the door. She was stepping down from the porch as he drove up.

“Climb in here,” she commanded, “and we’ll take a drive.” Despite the warmth she looked

crisp and cool in light sport clothes. She swung north up the shore road.

"Tell me all about it," she urged. "Or as much as you know. Someone at the hotel saw it in the paper and showed it to me. Dad's in New York. Naturally I came to you for details. What in the world is behind so preposterous a thing? It's fantastic. Is it a joke?"

He hesitated. He had not foreseen this difficulty. Could he tell Patricia the truth about her father? He might as well, he concluded, for any quixotic yarn he could invent would eventually be riddled. He outlined the events up to his interview in the company's New York offices. Suddenly he stopped. "I can't tell you this, Pat," he exclaimed. "Can't you see how impossible it is? It's your own father. He's forced to do it to protect you and your mother. You'll have to get the facts elsewhere."

"Go on," she demanded peremptorily. "If my father is a thief and worse I might as well know it now as later." But her voice shook. Patricia's father had been more than a father. He had been her comrade, her confidant. Gordon went on to the end.



"Thank you," she said simply when he had concluded. "It's all clear enough." But she sat, head bowed, as though stunned. Gordon realized that her tragedy was far deeper than his own. At the very worst he would serve a term and could then set about reconstructing his life. But this girl had lost a father; it was irrevocable.

"I'm sorry," he said, and they sat in silence, the stillness broken only by the hoarse and not unmusical calls of the gulls which circled about the headland upon which their car lay parked. His heart bled for her and he was swept by an almost irresistible impulse to take her in his arms, to comfort and shield her, to seek to repair the damage he had done.

"You can feel compassion for me," she said at last wonderingly. "And I'm a contributing cause to this wrong. It's my extravagance, my worthless superfluous existence which has played its part. Oh, how I hate it all, the shoddiness of it, the ostentation, the wasting of the fruit of others' toil; the cheap standards, the tawdry rivalries. This might all have been avoided had my family, any of us, had any understanding of worth-while values. Well, . . . I'm through. I refuse to live on such

tainted money. I shall go to New York and get a job. I'll learn stenography perhaps—anything that will pay me twenty dollars a week, and I'll live on that twenty. It's not I who should be pitied—it's you. This is my Nemesis. But you . . . you don't deserve this. I can see no sense to it."

"Get a job?" echoed Gordon. "What about Beaudry?"

"Beaudry! He's part of it all. I want to cut loose from the whole absurd show. Why should Beaudry wish to marry the daughter of a thief and perjurer? I'm not fit to marry anyone. I'm a receiver of stolen goods. But I couldn't marry him anyway. . . . I don't love him. I fooled myself—as usual. He is actually repellent to me. It was because I am thoroughly dishonest with myself that I accepted him. He has gone back to New York and I shall write him to-night, breaking with him.

"But my problem is of no importance. Yours is serious. Perhaps I can persuade my father to do something . . . to tell the truth . . . whatever the consequence. That's far better than that he should swear away the freedom of a man who is innocent." She spoke

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with a quiet calm which carried conviction. This was no desperate outburst later to be revoked.

“Please don’t mix into this affair, Pat. It’s a matter for men. I’ll put up a strong fight and Burton, my lawyer, is very competent. I have a fighting chance.” Everything within him rejected the thought of utilizing Keller’s love for his daughter to his own advantage.

“You have no right to demand that I sit with my hands folded,” she protested vehemently. “I am involved. I have been living on the money that was stolen. Because it was stolen, you are to suffer for it.”

“But your father can’t confess,” he objected. “He’s got your mother, and you, to think about—and Wellington. His hands are tied. Everyone’s hands are tied. Not one soul in this situation can do other than he is doing. Can’t you see that?”

Patricia shook her head stubbornly. “Any alternative is better than the one he has chosen,” she asserted positively. “I don’t understand life. It is too much for me. But if there are any spiritual laws at work, if truth possesses any power, he will be punished.”

“You say you’re going to work.” Gordon’s



thoughts persisted in pursuing Patricia's decision through all its implications. "What will you do and where will you live? Your father will remain here until fall. He'll have to, unless he replaces me with another man. And Captain Tucker is quitting, you know."

"I don't wonder. Why, I haven't any idea. I'll have to get some training which is salable. Then I'll hunt up a job and room somewhere, I suppose. I simply will not live on money which was stolen and whose stealing put you in prison, Douglas."

"But you don't understand what you're facing. A beautiful girl, working, living alone. Work if you will but live with your family. You don't know what beasts men can be. Don't do anything drastic until you get back to New York in the autumn."

"Douglas Gordon . . . what is the matter with you? You'd think I were a Jane Austen female! How can I live at home? They'll be glad to see me go after I speak my mind. I know perfectly well how things will line up. Clifford will see it as I do. Mother will pretend that it's 'business' and that she doesn't understand it."

She started the car, gave it the gas with vi-



cious emphasis and they shot down the road.

"I'll keep you posted on exactly what I do," she promised as she dropped him at Mrs. Hale's. With a firm handshake, she drove off.

## CHAPTER XXXII

DOUGLAS, DEAR :

I was so glad to get your letter although, of course, it was not like getting all the details direct. I thought it best to come home for a few days—in fact I felt I owed it to my family to tell them all the facts first hand.

As you know, Mother, who is rather a stickler for the conventions, has never liked our living together in the same house; that is, since we became engaged—and now she is very insistent that I remain here until the whole thing is settled. Of course it is my instinct to wish to be at your side but, as she says, in view of the inevitable publicity which will attend this affair, it would be courting unpleasant notoriety for me to return. You see it offers a fine opportunity for those feminine feature writers to sentimentalize about us: my loyal support of my lover and all that sort of thing.

The only other alternative, it seems to me, would be to get married at once and it does seem as though you had enough difficulties just now without saddling yourself with a wife. I am anxious to do what you think best about this whole matter and am writing you for advice.

THE letter ran on for several pages and ended on a rather querulous note of resentment against this misfortune which bade fair so to interfere with their plans. It was not that Phyllis apparently blamed Gordon, but she did feel, one inferred from her words, that it was most disastrous for all concerned that he should be so unfortunate. In the same mail was a letter from Mrs. Winslow. She expressed sincere sympathy for him, was confident that he would be vindicated, but hoped he would realize that, under the circumstances, he owed it to Phyllis to view their relations as committing neither to any definite claim upon the other. She closed with the suggestion that he write Phyllis to that effect and that doubtless, as a consequence, Phyllis would feel that she should return his ring.

It is one of life's most baffling features that only time and experience can test the genuineness of one's emotion. More than one woman, for example, has remained single, faithful to the memory of a lost lover with whom, had she married him, she would have been utterly unhappy. We call it sentimentalism yet sentimentalists can suffer as poignantly as though their emotions were real.

Phyllis's letter was, no doubt, what Gordon interpreted it to be, an attempt to play safe. If he were acquitted and rehabilitated himself, she was willing to marry him. But she wished to risk as little as possible on the outcome; she was hedging. Probably he had evoked from her as much as she had to give. But how little that was. He felt no resentment, only a dazed realization that he had staked his happiness on one woman's nature and lost. He was in his room, alone, as he read the letters. In one corner was a small airtight stove. He took the cabinet photograph of Phyllis which stood upon his bureau, tore it up methodically into small pieces, dropped them into the stove and touched a match to them. He would write her that evening cancelling everything. Then he went downstairs and stepped into his car preparatory to driving to Hereford to transfer his bail sureties.

Caliban, who had definitely refused to be a quarry dog and who, after trailing Gordon home several evenings, had been permitted to adopt Mrs. Hale's as his abode, greeted him with absurd manifestations of delight. Tail wagging frantically, huge mouth expanded in a grotesque grin, his great red tongue hang-



ing out, he demanded to accompany his master. Much disturbed by Gordon's visit to New York, spending the time as Mrs. Hale put it "moping about," he felt nervous at any sign of Gordon's departure.

"Climb in," said Gordon resignedly. "You don't know enough to know when to quit a sinking ship." Barking with joy at this opportunity to proclaim his distinction from dogs who were forced to depend upon their own legs for locomotion, he settled himself with great dignity on the front seat.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

“DAD, I want to have a talk with you.”

Keller had come down from Boston on a morning train and was enjoying his cigar after lunch on the porch. He looked up from his paper with that expression of bantering affection with which he generally greeted his daughter. His face became more serious as he sensed the tension in Patricia's attitude.

“Go ahead,” he suggested. “Everything all right about you and Allen?”

“Nothing's all right about anything,” she affirmed and her voice betrayed the strain she felt. This was going to be a difficult interview. For a moment she had a feeling that she must be mistaken . . . that Gordon . . . no, Gordon was one stable rock in an ocean of lies.

“It's serious,” she said. “Let's go out to the summer house in the grove.” She led the way to a secluded spot where they would be free from interruption.

“It's about Douglas Gordon,” she opened.

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"I read about his arrest in the paper and later I saw him."

"So the local papers carried it." This was news to Keller. He had thought his children still in ignorance. Engrossed in the imminent details of the situation it had not occurred to him to speculate upon their reactions. "Well, what about it?" He spoke with a hint of impatience, feeling that the only way to carry it off was to adopt an attitude of resentment at a woman's interference in business matters.

"What about it? Merely that Douglas Gordon is innocent of a hint of dishonesty and you know it, Dad. You and Wellington are using him as a scapegoat. I may not know much about business but I can see that clearly enough."

Keller was silent. This was an unforeseen exigency. Something told him of the hopelessness of seeking to convince Patricia of Gordon's dishonesty. The words died on his lips. He heaved a long sigh.

"Pat, I've got to go through with it. It isn't only me. It's your mother and you youngsters. And I can't double-cross Wellington. I'll see to Gordon's future after he gets . . . after it's all over. I've told him

so. I wish to God that this had never happened. I was going broke on the Bellport contract and I wish I'd faced the music. I might have come back even at my age. I have before. Now I'm in it, I've got to go through with it. But don't think I like it."

"But, Dad, can't you see that this business of Gordon is far and away the worst factor in the case? It was bad enough to"—she hesitated—"yes, to steal from the government, but then to shift the blame to Douglas—that is ten times worse." She spoke with nervous emphasis. "That is what I can hardly credit. It can't be you, my father, who is doing that. Some fiend has taken possession of you. Oh, Dad," she pleaded, "it's not too late. If there's no way out but making a clean breast of it, do it. I'd honor you far more in prison stripes than to see you go free with Douglas Gordon serving your sentence."

He shook his head, not stubbornly, but slowly and inexorably. "I can't, Puss. There are too many others involved. There's Denton, for example. I'm committed with him. I've got to keep afloat to meet that obligation. There's Wellington. And there's your mother. If I were alone in this thing and



you put it to me as you have—I might do as you say. But I'm not a free agent. God knows I hate to see Gordon pay. All I can do is to try to make it up to him afterwards."

Patricia looked at him incredulously.

"How utterly absurd!" she burst forth. "Are you really seriously trying to make me believe that ethically it is preferable to shift this to Douglas's shoulders rather than to abandon Wellington and Denton: both of them involved from the very beginning? Oh, Dad, do be honest with *yourself!*"

"No, I'm not!" he snapped it out, trying to become angry. "But I name that factor as just one of many. I'm caught, I tell you. . . . trapped; tied hard and fast. I've got just one loophole and I'm using it."

"But that's just the point." She spoke slowly and with an effort at controlled calm. "The loophole. You must see that the treachery that involves is so much worse than the original swindle. I should think you'd grasp the chance for confession with relief. It's so much the better alternative." Then as he remained silent, "Or if you won't confess, why not simply cut and run? Anything is better than this insane idea."

"No, I've got to go through with it, I tell you. It's all been worked out along those lines." He spoke with discouraging lack of emphasis, like an automaton, invulnerable to argument.

Patricia's nerves gave way. "You mean you're a coward!" she ejaculated with passionate scorn. "That you're yellow. That you gamble and then welch when the cards run against you. And then you frame someone to pay!" The words tumbled forth impetuously.

"Yes, that's one way of looking at it. But I notice you've done your share in spending the money." Keller's tone was sarcastic.

Patricia winced. The charge was unjust. But it brought home to her her father's always unfailing generosity, the bond between them.

"I won't defend myself." She spoke more calmly. "If I'd had any idea . . . well, you know that. But I'm sorry for what I said. I know that our scale of living is largely to blame. But, oh, Dad! Don't do this thing. I'm begging for your own sake. I know you'll never again know a happy moment if it succeeds."

Keller groaned. "I don't expect to. But

I've got to do it. I've got to keep afloat. Then I can do things. Get Gordon out maybe. But I must be free, where I can get action. I've been through a lot of tight squeezes but I've always got by. In jail I'd be helpless."

There the situation lay after a half hour's discussion. "Then I'm through," Patricia spoke with solemn finality. "I'm going to New York to get some kind of training and then I'm going to work. I've broken with Beaudry." In the face of Keller's arguments, she proved to be quite as unshakable as he had been.

"About Gordon," she went on, "I don't know that I can be of any help to him. But I warn you that I'll do anything in my power to clear him even if it incriminates you. I just know that in the long run it would be better for you to shoulder this thing. There must be justice in the universe. And this is the rankest injustice I've ever heard of."

But she could draw no sparks. Keller was too grieved at this development, too disturbed at his daughter's disillusionment, to display anger. That Clifford would support Patri-



cia's stand, he felt certain. He had already received Captain Tucker's curt resignation. But it was his daughter's desertion which hurt most. He tried to manufacture indignation against Gordon for his disclosure of the facts, but found it difficult. Patricia had sought him out and challenged him. She had a right to the truth. His heavy shoulders sagged as the two returned to the hotel. He did not altogether credit her resolve to seek work; nor yet her severance with her fiancé. The one would in any case probably weaken in the face of the discipline and drudgery of whatever job she might secure; the other would melt perhaps under the ardor of Beaudry's attack.

Keller approved Beaudry though he did not like him. There was something about the man, a certain consciousness of his own rectitude, not Pharisaism—that was hardly the word—but a curious and, to Beaudry himself, regrettable detachment which made him a man incapable of friendships. Self-sufficient, self-contained, he seemed to need nothing that a friend could give. His relations with Keller were courteous and, despite the efforts of both men, distant. They bored each other. But as



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a prospective son-in-law, he was altogether eligible. Keller was deeply disturbed by Patricia's rejection, particularly at this uncertain period, of Beaudry's protection. He would enlist his wife's counsel that evening.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

DURING the following weeks Gordon was busy with the preparation of his defense. It looked none too promising; the ease with which the indictment was secured indicated that. He and Burton had sat down and systematically forecasted the details of the prosecution. It would of course be built upon forged evidence supplied by Keller and Wellington coupled with Denton's testimony. Burton would enlist handwriting experts to discredit the forged documents, but the difficulty with expert testimony is that it is so easy to secure for either side.

And how to prove that Denton was committing perjury? Lacking evidence of the deal between him and the company, what jury would believe that he was deliberately and gratuitously involving an innocent man? The only hope seemed to be to break down his testimony under cross-examination. That Gordon's previous record was without blemish was discounted by the fact that Denton's was also.

Previous records meant little in a case of this sort, where the crime was unusual, the temptation seldom presented. Burton would stress the point that the sums alleged to have been secured by Gordon were absurdly small considering the risk involved; that had he been crooked he would have sought to secure a split from the Keller Construction Company which obviously had been the principal gainer by the entire transaction. But the company had not even been accused.

"Why?" demanded Gordon as they discussed the matter in Burton's office.

"That's one of the worst features," admitted the lawyer. "The prosecution has evidently been fixed too. They don't want the truth."

"Then why was any charge brought against anyone?"

"Because more than one department was involved. The one which smelled a rat had not been taken care of; possibly was not venal. But they are not the same crowd to whom the prosecution was delegated."

"It looks hopeless," asserted Gordon.

"No, not hopeless. There's a chance of a disagreement. The prosecution doesn't really care whether you go to the pen or not except

in so far as their professional pride in securing a conviction is involved. But they do want to appear to be zealous in the discharge of their duty."

It was through Burton's office that Patricia finally established contact with Gordon. One morning in September, the telephone girl gave him a message which was merely a request that he call Miss Keller at the number given.

"I do so want to have a talk with you," she said. "Can you meet me at, say . . . oh, at the Cabin at six? We'll have dinner there." The Cabin was a restaurant on Eighth Street, not known to Grand Rapids, where the food was good and the atmosphere not consciously Bohemian. They had dined there the previous winter.

Gordon's face was aglow as she entered, dressed he noted more simply than he had ever seen her, at least in New York. She wore an inexpensive dark blue tailored frock topped by a smart little black hat. Here was someone who did not question his probity.

She squeezed his hand warmly. "Let's eat in the yard," she suggested. "It's so mild and the stars are out." They found a table in the corner, remote from the crowd.



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"Well?" he prompted. Then as she waited. . . . "I've absolutely nothing new to tell you. Busy trying to make the truth sound true, and it doesn't—very."

"And Phyllis?" she suggested.

"How stupid. I assumed you knew. I don't know why. That's all off. She never really cared for me," and he told her the circumstances.

"She gave you as much as she had to give," said Patricia. A long moment's silence. "But she's a bundle of complexes, repressions, conventions and that moral cowardice which marks her type. I knew she'd never stand up to it.

"Well . . . you want to know what I've been up to. I had a talk with Dad as I told you I would, and you were right. He stands pat, thinks he has to. We didn't quarrel, for after all I'm involved as a sort of accessory before the fact, if there is any such phrase! I couldn't very well pose as an angel of judgment. But I did tell him that I'd live no longer on stolen money and that if I could help you get clear I would, even if it incriminated him. He's far from happy over the situation. Cliff and I talked it over and he has gone to

work in Schenectady for the General Electric. Refused to go through college on money that came that way. Then Mother tackled me and we did have a row!" Patricia laughed as she recalled it but she set her cup down with unnecessary emphasis.

"Those Victorians! What is the matter with them? Seemed to think that because I had no money to speak of I would take it lying down. She had three grievances . . . my interference in this matter of yours, my subversion of Cliff—and my breaking with Allen. So I packed up and came to New York with total resources of six hundred dollars; no, it was six hundred and six! Dad was away when all this happened about three weeks ago. It's not so heroic as it sounds as I've had no trouble with him and of course can draw upon him if I have to. I went to the Martha Washington and promptly started in taking a secretarial course. And that's what I'm doing now except that I'm rooming in a little apartment on Eleventh Street with a girl I met at the school, Martha Linscott, an Iowa University girl. She's trying to break into writing advertising via the stenographic route. We'll go round there after dinner. Allen writes me

frantically at intervals but doesn't know where I'm living nor shall I tell him."

"And your work? Do you like it?"

She groaned. "I love to typewrite, but the stenography! I'm learning something, I'll tell you, and one thing I've learned is to respect a good stenographer! How soft and worthless our minds are, we lazy butterflies, parroting opinions on art and literature cribbed from *Town and Country*, and feeling superior, if you'll believe it, to a girl who has mastered a craft, a stenographer! I find it desperately difficult but I've got my teeth into it and I wouldn't let go now for a job as Queen of Sheba. I'll master it and prove my ability to earn a good salary as a secretary if it gives me brain fever!" The set of Patricia's firm chin showed that she meant business.

Dinner over, Patricia insisting that it be dutch, they sauntered down Eighth Street toward Sixth Avenue. "It was tactless of you," laughed Gordon as they passed the Jefferson Market bastille. But though he jested, a chill and poisonous breath seemed to envelop them, an emanation from the dark forbidding structure, an 1876 interpretation, apparently, of a German schloss.



Gordon cherished no illusions about prisons. He had read Donald Lowrie, Ed Morrell and Frank Tannenberg. He knew jails to be obscene hells, crawling with vermin, putrid with the stench of sewage, ruled by brutalized thugs morally as debased as, and often more debased than, the prisoners themselves. Incredible anachronisms, survivals of medieval ignorance and indifference, the present-day prison remains a blot upon our civilization. But Gordon had himself well in hand. Though cursed with sufficient imagination to graphically visualize the menace which threatened, his will was strong, his philosophy stoical. With an effort he cut short the trend of his thoughts.

“Do you know I’m beginning to feel the lure of the Village?” he remarked. “There is something so informal and livable about it. It lacks the sharp edges of New York; the tempo seems more leisurely.”

“I love it. I’d hate to go uptown again.”

They paused for a moment before turning into Eleventh Street. Suffused in the warm glow of autumnal twilight, the harsh outlines of day blurred by the dusk, Sixth Avenue was bathed in atmospheric beauty. The city



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breathed more tranquilly after the day's hurly burly.

"Whistler could have evoked something out of that," suggested the girl.

Patricia's apartment was three flights up in the rear, in an old house which had been remodeled and renovated for flat dwellers. A fairly large living room, not unattractively furnished, a tiny bedroom just large enough for the girls' two narrow beds, a bath and an absurdly small kitchenette comprised it.

"But behold!" Patricia pointed to it triumphantly. "A really, truly workable fireplace. We don't need it for warmth but it's so cheery," and kneeling before it, she kindled a blaze.

"How it brings out the glints in your hair." Something in Gordon's voice, a caressing note, brought the color to her cheeks.

"Come, sit here and enjoy the fire in this big chair," she suggested. "I'll change into something less officy. Martha won't be in till late. She's gone to the theatre with her beau."

Patricia disappeared into her bedroom, reappearing transformed in a draped negligée of palest blue which in its seductive allure could have been evolved in but one city . . .

Paris. She curled up in a big armchair flanking the other side of the fireplace and lighted a cigarette.

"You're rather breath-taking in that rig," conceded Gordon, outwardly calm.

She smiled provocatively. "It's guaranteed to be a heartbreaker," she said gaily. "At least the salesgirl said so. And I have pretty arms, haven't I, Douglas?"

He smiled at her naïveté. "You're a gorgeous girl . . . but why state the obvious?"

She turned serious. "I suppose you think it's an impulse, my cutting loose and learning stenography and all. It isn't. This whole miserable business has merely served to precipitate what has been brewing in me for a long time . . . and you're chiefly responsible."

Gordon looked his question.

"Yes, you are. Don't you suppose I challenged your standards at their first impact? Don't you imagine I felt that tacitly they criticised mine? I had to persuade myself that mine were right to protect my vanity. Well, now I know who was right. I'll never again be politic or worldly wise. I'll compromise no longer. It's that which has made my father do what he has done. Most of the people on top

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are doing ignoble things. They may not steal but they do things almost as bad. The women, many of them, are spiritually bankrupt: they buy titles if they can afford it and give themselves to men for whom they care nothing. They select husbands with a good Bradstreet's rating.

"And the men," she shrugged her shoulders; "you know what Wall Street is. They curry acquaintance with people who can serve them financially, commercialize friendship and are in fiber coarse and common. I'm through with the whole gang. They are a corrupt, money-mad, soulless lot of bounders, male and female, not fit for a competent stenographer to associate with! I would rather marry a bank clerk and live in Flatbush!" She flicked the ash from her cigarette with a scornful gesture. "People really need so very little money. It's merely their own inherently shoddy aspirations which demand money for their fulfilment. For twenty-six years I've accepted ready-made standards. Now I'm beginning to think out my own and live by them. I like it!"

"Hear! hear!"

"You may scoff but I mean it."

"I know you mean it and I congratulate you.



You've found salvation as they used to say in the old days. Why should I scoff?"

"If the man I marry betrays any signs of being in any worldly sense eligible, I'll know at once that he's the wrong one. I want a man whose standards are like mine, or higher, and such a man could never be eligible in the world's eyes. I'm suspicious somehow of a love which doesn't demand some sacrifice. I would be for me anyway."

So they talked on, finding as always so many ideas to exchange that the hours had wings. The logs crackled merrily for awhile then turned gray, flickering fitfully . . . at last extinguished. But they took no note of them.

"I'm so content," said Patricia once with a deep sigh. "It's like last winter. We had such good times, didn't we? I've never been myself, really myself, with anyone but you."

To Gordon, the evening seemed, in recalling it later, magically insulated against past and future, against the world without. They were together and happy . . . it was enough. It seemed as though they were held in an emotional vortex; the air was electric—an irresistible force drew them to each other. As Gordon struck a match for his companion's cig-



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arette and she leaned forward, her finger tips touched his and through him flashed an indescribable thrill. And when Patricia, arising from her knees from mending the fire, swayed uncertainly, the guiding clasp of his hand on her shapely forearm sent a warm flush to her cheeks. Once Gordon rose abruptly and ranged nervously about the room, staring abstractedly at the prints the girls had hung.

"Do sit down, Douglas, that's a good boy," she urged. "You make me uneasy, and after all this time it's not your back I want to look at . . . it's your face. Are you afraid to sit near me? Am I so dangerous?" He subsided and they fell to discussing the Village and its significance.

"The whole country sneers at it, envies it—and copies it," asserted Patricia. "It's amazing, its influence upon women's fashions, for example. And intellectually too. Zenith finally patterns upon it. Psychoanalysis is only one instance. Imported here from Vienna, it has gradually swept the country."

But Gordon, suddenly and inexplicable irritable, disagreed. "Superficially it is attractive," he averred. "But it's populated principally by egotists; people lacking authentic

talent whose ego is so overpowering that they fondly conceive themselves misunderstood geniuses."

"Douglas . . . will you teach me to roll a cigarette?" Patricia asked. "I know I'd like them so much better. You know how, don't you?"

"Yes, I learned in the mining camps."

She produced some papers and a little bag of tobacco. Adroitly Gordon rolled one, showed her how to turn it with the first and second fingers, guiding it with the thumbs and tightening the pressure at the right moment. "It's not easy to learn," he explained. "You may spoil a hundred before you get it."

Patricia's efforts evoked shrieks of laughter. They were such lopsided, pathetic parodies. "Now show me again," she exclaimed. "I'll watch every move." Springing up she perched on the arm of his chair where she could study the operation as it would appear to him. As she leaned over intently, her bare arm pressed his cheek, the sweet perfume of her presence enveloped him in a fragrant clinging mantle. Gordon's fingers trembled. The tobacco spilled. He jumped up suddenly.

"Why do you torture me, Pat? You know

I've loved you since the day you gave me my first lesson in love. I'd loved you for years before I ever saw you."

She stood, her eyes two sapphire stars, her whole body yearning toward him. "Then why don't you take me. . . . Douglas?"

In that clairvoyance which is vouchsafed stumbling mortals only in rare exalted moments each knew in the ecstasy of that embrace in which they melted into one, garments of flesh consumed in the flame of love, that their very souls were in that instant for all time united, indissolubly, irrevocably, inextricably. Time had ceased . . . yesterday and to-morrow were but the shadow of a dream.

In a world without time, without space—a world miraculously shorn of human limitations, they found themselves fused. On the mantel the clock ticked unheard; the clatter of the nearby L was to their consciousness expunged. To how few in this world awry is love vouchsafed. And even by them it can but be accepted with reverent thanksgiving—not understood. Transcending all savants' theories, flouting religion's dogmas, it releases unsuspected talents, makes mystics of materialists



and in thousands of unchronicled lives has replaced wearied resignation with a life warm, rich, athrill with vitality. Marriage is no failure. It is merely that the married fail. Few souls are so besotted but that they have in some moment of profounder insight, some mood of aching longing, some flight to heights afar, become for an instant attuned to voices, inaudible to their physical ear, which with quiet insistence have assured them that love is not an illusion; that some time, some where, their dream finds realization.

“Why, Douglas! What has happened to us?” Patricia gasped the words almost inaudibly, so shaken was she by the intensity of the emotion which engulfed her. Her will, her personality seemed dominated completely by the cosmic force which, sweeping through her, held her subject to its purpose. She was, she felt, but a medium, a vessel for the expression of a power illimitably greater than any she could herself have conceived. Blindly, instinctively, her fingers played over his features, caressed his hair.

He strained her still closer. “Darling! . . . My darling!” he repeated endlessly . . . a man intoxicated. He was drunk with love.



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Tears of happiness welled from her eyes. He kissed them away.

Then as they sat together on the couch, Patricia half reclining in his arms, came the inevitable retrospections, comparisons, reminiscences.

“It seems to me now that I loved you the very moment you came climbing over the gunwale; all wet and flapping—and so quietly competent. But I didn’t realize it then, of course. I didn’t really suspect, even subconsciously, and begin to fight against it until,” she hesitated searching her memory, “until I got back to New York after that time I kissed you. I think that as I found how much I missed you it began to dawn on me though not consciously. You found me so dignified you said in New York. I suppose that was why. And you?”

“I’ve always loved you. I was born with the dream of you in my heart. But it was that autumn afternoon when you kissed me . . .” he kissed her again, “it was then I guess that it happened, though I didn’t know enough to know it. When you wrote me that you were engaged . . . that hurt. And I sought escape from the pain through another.”

And so they talked, seeking to reveal themselves to each other, demanding from love complete unity and understanding, secure in the knowledge that whatever faults they exposed the other's love would forgive them.

There Martha Linscott found them when she came in at midnight.

"Who is that attractive man?" she inquired curiously after Gordon had left. "And what made him seem so abstracted? One felt that he might meet you ten minutes from now and not recognize you. Is he always that way—sort of dazed?"

"Don't hold him responsible." Patricia laughed excitedly. "He's got a good deal on his mind anyway. And now he's got me there too. He just . . . no—strictly speaking, I did! No matter, we're going to be married anyway. Oh, Martha, Martha, I'm simply hopelessly, hectically, insanely mad about him!"

## CHAPTER XXXV

GORDON removed his traps from the uptown hotel at which he had been registered and secured a room near Patricia's. They were together constantly; breakfasted at a neighboring French restaurant and dined where their whim led them. Both girls devoted three evenings a week to practising stenography in their rooms, Gordon dictating the copy. He was impressed with Patricia's earnestness.

"After all, why take it with such desperate seriousness?" he inquired one evening as the two sat over their cigarettes and coffee at the Inn in Sheridan Square. "If things break right, you'll marry me. If they don't, you'll eventually become reconciled with your family and won't need it."

"Do you think I'd ever go back to that way of living?" she demanded indignantly, "and with people who had done that to you? Douglas Gordon! Don't *you* understand me?" It was a half hour before he was forgiven. They



were completely happy save for the shadow cast by the impending trial.

Seated later before the fire in Patricia's room, she said, "It's all my fault. I've known, deep down inside, that you were my man for ever so long. And you knew it. I could have had you last winter and then perhaps this never would have happened. But I was such a cheap little cad then; I thought I had to marry a captain of industry, at least. Douglas . . . how can you stand me?" Her questions were smothered in the impetuous ardor of his embrace. Gordon, the man, was quiet, dignified, completely poised. But Gordon, the lover, left nothing to be desired in fervor and intensity.

"Douglas, dear . . . I want you to marry me *now*. Let's go down to the Municipal Building or wherever it's done, to-morrow. I want so to be your wife. I want to live with you, to look after you . . . to be everything to you. I can't stand our being separated the way we are. I can't bear to have to say good night. And it might make a difference too in the trial—if the daughter of John Keller had thus shown her contempt for the charges brought against you."



Then began a contest of wills which raged for weeks. "It's not Quixotism—it's not chivalry," protested Gordon, "it's plain ordinary honor and decency. For me to marry you with this jail term hanging over me would be morally a crime. God only knows how I long to make you my wife. Pat . . . you know how hopelessly, how madly in love with you I am. But let's face facts. I might get ten years . . . twenty. Suppose I got twenty. I'd come out aged fifty-eight."

"It wouldn't make any difference." Patricia's eyes were wet. "Never as long as I lived could I ever look at another man. I'm your woman, Douglas. I belong to you . . . for always and always and always. I would never have believed myself capable of such a love." But Gordon was adamant.

One evening when he was absent in Bellport where he had gone to secure affidavits from his bank covering the details of his deposits, the telephone rang. Martha was out and Patricia answered.

"Mr. Keller to see you, Miss." It was the hall man's voice.

"Send him up."

Keller's step was heavy and old as he

climbed the stairs. She greeted him challengingly.

"Look pretty comfortable here," was her father's comment as he shed his topcoat and sat down wearily. "We're taking an apartment ourselves on Park Avenue, Mother and I. I've let the house for a year. She returns from Jasmine to-morrow. You look well, I'll confess." He sighed heavily. "I don't know what the world's coming to. Why don't you come home, Pat? We need you and won't interfere with any of your independent plans for earning a living. How's it coming anyway?"

"I can take eighty words. Must get up to a hundred and twenty before I'm satisfied. Then I'll get a job!" She spoke with decision. "As for coming home, I'm afraid it would be embarrassing. Douglas is here every night when he's in New York. We're going to be married."

"Holy mackerel! You don't mean Gordon?"

"Of course."

He seemed visibly to lose size and weight as he sat there. He put his hand to his head in a dazed fashion. "But you must be crazy, girl. He's going to be tried in January. And Den-

ton's testimony will send him over the road for sure. He probably will get ten years. What's the idea of all this? If you wanted the man, why didn't you take him before all this business came up?"

"Because I didn't realize that I loved him," Patricia said with simple dignity. "But now I do, and it wouldn't make any difference to me if he went to the chair. I'd have to go on loving him."

Keller groaned. "Hell's bells! Nothing but trouble, and more trouble. Next thing you'll be telling me you're married." He viewed her with a sudden panic suspicion.

"No, but we would have been long ago if I'd had my way. I'm constantly urging him, but he refuses. Won't let me tie myself to a prospective convict, condemned on the strength of his father-in-law's perjured evidence." Her tone was bitter.

Keller sat silent seeking to adjust himself to this blow. But the more he studied the situation, the worse it seemed. Finally he arose weakly.

"It's all too much for me. I'm getting old. I'll come again soon when I feel better and get more used to it all. You know where I

am, Pat. Come in any time for money. Or 'phone me and I'll mail it. Good night. I'm getting old, child. And I fear my last years will be black."

She heard him stumble blindly down the stairs and found it in her heart to pity him, though his evil schemes were rending and tearing the very soul of her.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

IN that casual unstudied fashion which marks the Village, they found to their surprise that they began to accumulate a group of friends. Douglas and Patricia, utterly absorbed as they were in their own happiness and jealous of any interruptions, would have sought no human contacts, but it was perhaps their very happiness, the harmony and serenity which they radiated despite the Damoclean sword which hung suspended, that attracted others.

Martha, a squarely built girl with heavy eyebrows, escaped but a few months from Yankton, was aquiver with desire to know the colorful characters who dwelt in the quartier. From the broadly sketched types whom everybody knew, to the unobtrusive, hard-working folk, writers and journalists, who loved the Village for its informality and its atmosphere, she wished to know them all—and all about them. And she did know a great many. Upon the strength of some stories published in her college monthly, she proclaimed herself

a writer and thus sought and secured election to the Whitney Studio Club. She was voluble regarding Cezanne, Matisse, Picabia and the rest.

Martha could perhaps have secured work among the ranks of the thousands of facile pens who earn a living on the staffs of the scores of magazines which pour from Manhattan's presses but with the canny insight which so often marks the middle western college product, she preferred the longest way round to a copy desk in an advertising agency. She knew a girl who was drawing a hundred and fifty dollars weekly in that capacity with hours from nine to five and nothing to worry her after those hours. "Some of the journalist-magazine crowd do better," she explained, "but they don't last as long." She had taken an advertising course in college; been repulsed by every agency of standing in New York, and now planned to break in via the stenographic route.

Through Martha's contacts, therefore, they began to meet the Villagers. There was Grant Woodruff, dark and bespectacled, hair banged; silent upon every subject but literature upon which he would descant at length.

He wrote book reviews and syndicated theatrical comment through western and southern papers. The man's quiet sturdiness attracted Gordon and he would patiently submit to being cross-examined about his profession, a subject which fascinated Woodruff. "It's real work, you know, a man's work. We're all embroidery down here." Woodruff was to publish his first novel four years later, a sincere and distinguished work, largely autobiographical, which created a sensation, the first of a series which would establish him as a significant figure. He never confessed that he had any ambitions in that direction.

There was Anna Talbot, flaxen-haired and in danger of fat, who was staff interviewer on one of the movie magazines. She knew everyone in the movie and theatrical world and, gifted with a light, satirical touch, would entertain them when in the mood with a monologue about her experiences with posing celebrities. Arthur Fancher was another of their group. He earned a very decent living writing penny dreadfuls at two cents a word for the cheap magazines and himself possessed acute and sensitive critical perceptions. His own taste ran to Gissing, Swinnerton and



Couperus. He derived real pleasure from his own work, he confessed, in seeing what he "could get away with" in piling Pelion upon Ossa. Although in his thirties he seemed in his boyish exuberance and his refusal to be serious, an undergraduate.

At the Civic Club on Twelfth Street to which they had access through several of these friends, they met many of the Village celebrities. Hindoos seeking to enlist American support for the liberation of India, Sinn Fein advocates, a colored poet, Jewish intelligentsia, a playwright whose work some years later brought him world fame, and many artists and sculptors. Most of these people knew of the threat which menaced Gordon but far from discrediting him in their eyes, it lent a certain romantic glamour to his personality. Whatever their weaknesses and vanities, two qualities they shared in common, independence of judgment and skepticism of the world's standards. They assumed that he was, as his friends asserted, the victim of a frame-up. And when they learned that Patricia was the daughter of one of his accusers they found the situation irresistibly dramatic.

As for Caliban whom Gordon had brought



to New York upon his last trip to Bellport, he was voted quite hopelessly intriguing, a dog born for the Village. His inimitable grin was even immortalized in the pages of one of the magazines which for a brief period served as the medium for the message of some of the younger artists and free verse writers. He was devoted to Patricia and she had promptly capitulated to his eccentric personality. "He is so satisfyingly hideous," she asserted. "He looks as though he belonged in the cast of a Mack Sennet comedy!"

It was a strange period in their lives. Life was so rich and stimulating, fate had given them so much, youth and love, health and an eager interest in their environment—and then with bitter irony threatened it all. Sometimes for hours at a time they were able to thrust it from their consciousness.

October that year was a glory of crimson and gold. Gordon had shipped his car to New York and kept it in a neighboring garage. Sundays found them with Martha and Fancher or Martha and Woodruff in the tonneau, idling through the scarlet and yellow lanes of Westchester and Connecticut. Sometimes they pushed north into Dutchess County,

occasionally drove down into Long Island although the setting sun on the homeward trip proved trying. Generally they carried sandwiches and a Thermos bottle and lunched by the roadside.

One day they sat by the shore of a lake in Westchester, a lake which, dreaming in the mellow beauty of October, a pale amethyst in a setting of rich russets, seemed infinitely remote from Manhattan. Someone spoke of the pathos of autumn. And Martha quoted that poem of Mangan's ascribed by him to Kemaloomi born six centuries ago in Caramania:

To this khan—and from this khan

How many pilgrims came—and went too!

In this khan—and by this khan

What arts were spent—what hearts were  
rent too!

For some reason it brought home to Patricia the tragedy of her love. Tears welled to her eyes and bowing her head, she wept silently but uncontrollably. Why, she demanded, should a happiness so poignant as to be all but unbearable be inextricably commingled with so torturing a threat? Her imagination stimulated by the very intensity of

her love pictured Gordon thrust into the obscene filth, the indescribable brutality and depravity of that correspondent of hell, a present-day prison; attacked by vermin, manacled to felons, exposed to vile diseases. Sometimes as she tossed about at night a prey to these pictures, she feared that her mind would become unhinged. And then in the bright autumn sunshine her fears would vanish; it seemed too utterly preposterous that a man like Gordon could suffer such a fate. Any jury, she felt, could not fail to grasp the quality of the man, his palpable honesty and uprightness.

One Saturday afternoon as she was leaving the house she met her mother coming in. She had not seen her since their embittered parting at Jasmine some weeks previous. They went upstairs. She could see that the elder woman intended to keep a tight rein on herself.

"Your father told me about you and Mr. Gordon," she explained after some desultory conversation. "Are you sure that you love him, Patricia, or is it the romance of the situation which appeals to you? You know you thought you loved Allen Beaudry. He keeps hounding me for your address."

Patricia regarded her mother helplessly,



aghast at the gulf which separated them. This woman she knew had never known love, even in her imagination. Cool and untouched by life, she was like so many women of her period utterly incapable of more than the most flaccid emotional experience. She had infused her own false standards into Patricia and only by a racking upheaval had she ejected them.

To try to interpret herself to such a woman was hopeless. Patricia contented herself with saying, "No, the situation does not impress me as being romantic; merely most unfortunate. I love Douglas and can never love anyone else."

Her mother's plea that she return to her house she met with a patient refusal. "It is too impossible," she explained. "I don't know how long I shall have him. Now I see him continually except when I'm at the school. And it's hardly conceivable that father would enjoy contact with him under the circumstances."

"But they needn't meet. And it looks so strange: your being away from home, yet in New York. People are talking."

Patricia laughed hysterically.

"Forgive me, Mother. But Mrs. Grundy



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seems rather unimportant just now—in the face of this incredible situation. Don't you understand? Douglas may be sent to jail and it's father who's sending him."

"It's always important," insisted Mrs. Keller primly, "what people think and say. If it weren't for that people would be doing all kinds of obnoxious things. They're restrained by public opinion. Certainly a girl's place is in her own home until she's married: a girl of your position and advantages."

Patricia gazed at her speculatively.

"Let's not discuss it, Mother," she said finally. "I haven't the slightest intention of returning—ever. Why waste our energy in argument?"

So the situation remained.

Her mother left shortly, concealing her sense of ingratitude and injury. With both her children challenging the ethics of her husband, a man who, though he meant little to her save the source of her support, was after all their father, she felt that the younger generation was indeed ungrateful and presumptuous. It was merely another example of the inexplicable revolt of youth upon which the newspapers and magazines were beginning to comment.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

THE court calendar had Gordon's case scheduled to be called early in January. The news that Burton was to defend him leaking out promptly focussed public attention upon the affair. It gave signs of becoming, perhaps, a cause *célèbre*.

Just before Christmas Patricia secured an opening, entirely without pull or patronage, traceable only to the endorsement of her school and her own ability to sell her services, as private secretary to an aged gentleman still active as the head of an old and stable dry goods jobbing house. It paid her twenty-five dollars weekly and upon this sum she lived. She was, of course, greatly aided by the fact that her wardrobe was sufficient, barring radical style changes, for a long time to come. Gordon listened with intense interest to her account of her first day.

"Douglas, if I live to be ten thousand I'll never forget the thrill I got this morning as I was engulfed in the flood that swept down-

town at eight-thirty. No," she shook her head impatiently as the waiter suggested another pastry. "Something happened to me. I can't explain it. It was like getting religion, I guess. I suddenly got such a lift, a sense of exaltation from the knowledge that at last I counted. This great roaring, screaming, careening machine, New York, commercial New York, had accepted me as one little useful pinion in its structure. For the first time in my life it made a real difference to someone who was engaged in useful work whether or not I got there. And think of all those futile, idle, bored years in which I just rode, a useless passenger. It's great to feel that you count; that you're not utterly superfluous."

Gordon smiled understandingly. But he wondered if her vision would illumine the dullness of the drudgery which could not fail at times to oppress this enthusiastic recruit to industry's army.

"And now when we're married you'll have to treat me with completest respect," she jibed, "for I'm an independent, self-supporting citizen and can leave you at a moment's notice and get a job!"

He was glad that she had this absorbing in-



terest to sustain her during the tension of the coming test. The trial, he knew, would be more difficult for her to bear than for himself. She sought to conceal from him the torment she suffered but her revelation of the wealth and splendor of her love rendered evident the bitter price in worry and despair she inevitably paid for her whole-souled surrender.

When she kissed him farewell at the Grand Central as he was leaving for Hereford for the final ordeal, she turned away quickly, head bowed, to avoid breaking down.

Gordon entered the Pullman, his own eyes misty, and sat down beside Burton. They had been over the case in every minutest detail during the previous weeks. Gordon knew exactly the offenses with which he was charged which included embezzlement of money of the United States, conspiracy to commit crime or to defraud the United States, causing to be presented to officer for approval and payment a false or fraudulent account, etc., etc.

Between the two men had developed a sincere liking, a sentiment based upon a certain resemblance of intellectual and ethical outlook, although in temperament they were dissimilar. Burton thoroughly enjoyed his pose,



which could not be said to be altogether a pose, as wealthy champion of the plain people. To illustrate exactly his attitude, one can but say that, did no favorable publicity attach to his chivalrous defense of the people's interests, he would nevertheless have sacrificed his time and talent to their cause. But the fact that his name was nationally famed for altruism, his position that of a wolf who nevertheless elected to protect rather than ravage the sheep appealed strongly to the histrionic facet of his complex nature.

They talked over their after-dinner cigars until well into the evening; then retired to snatch what rest they could in the speeding sleeping car. They arrived in Hereford the following noon and upon taking rooms at the Halsey House embarked upon the final arrangements preparatory to the battle which was scheduled to open the next week.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

As Gordon and Burton entered the court room on the morning of the trial and took their seats at the long table inside the railing which separated the judge's desk from the rest of the room, Gordon surveyed the scene interestedly, wondering how many of his Bellport friends and acquaintances were present. Although it was snowing heavily, local interest in the case which was one of the most important which had ever been tried in Hereford had served to fill the court room.

He recognized Mrs. Hale who nodded to him encouragingly and with her Mrs. Clarkson, her closest friend. A few rows behind them he noted Henry Tarr, the president of Bellport's sole bank and with whom he had had many pleasant chats. George Livingston, the Bellport garage man, was seated close to the wall and waved a hand in friendly greeting and not far from him were Will Carter and Will Simmons, the first the Bellport hardware store proprietor, the second the real estate man.

All these men Gordon had known casually and all of them, he could see from their emphatically cordial bows, were his supporters in the coming ordeal. "But," he thought, "they will not comprise the jury."

As he noted the craning of necks and stretching of bodies to see him, the man accused by properly constituted authorities of embezzling the money of the United States, he felt acute discomfort, until it occurred to him that he would have felt exactly as uncomfortable, perhaps more so, had he been riding in a procession as a hero, and with a smile of cheerful cynicism he settled back in his chair quite at ease.

He fell to speculating for the millionth time upon the probable verdict when suddenly it was borne in upon him, he knew not why, that it had all been decided from the beginning of time; that this whole dramatic affair should be viewed objectively as a moving picture film, that every word said by him or his counsel, the prosecuting attorney or any of the witnesses, were predestined utterances, and that in very truth it was utterly futile to worry about the result. What was written was written. With the knowledge came poise and relaxation.



The matter viewed thus coolly bade fair to be interesting.

After a few minutes Chandler Gifford, the prosecuting attorney, accompanied by Major Parsons, who was formally to represent the United States as complainant, sauntered in and sat down at the other end of the long table. They bowed frigidly to Gordon and his companion. Gifford surveyed Burton shrewdly and a bit uneasily. In crossing swords with this famous attorney he realized that he was challenging a man who, if reputation counted, was immeasurably his superior. Gifford had a local name as a bludgeoning prosecutor but he feared Burton's suave cleverness. Nevertheless, if his witnesses could be depended upon to keep their heads and stick to their stories, he could hardly fail. The cleverest attorney living may be defeated by witnesses who lie and stick to it.

Judge Elwood soon made his entrance accompanied by his court attendant, a grotesque looking man, lean and bony, who reminded Gordon of a character from Hogarth. He seemed an anachronism. The bailiff rapped smartly on the judge's desk and proclaimed in pompous accents, "Please rise!" A group of



minor motions were disposed of, then Elwood instructed his clerk to call the case of the United States versus Douglas Gordon. The impaneling of the jury quickly followed, a simple matter consisting of drawing by lot from the list of fifty men called to serve that month. Twelve men were soon seated in the jury box.

Gordon observed them carefully. They were, he could see, an altogether average jury, save for the fact that Hereford being a seaport town necessarily reflected that fact in any typical cross section of its population. An ideal jury from the viewpoint of an attorney for the defense in a case of this sort would comprise a group of men of the type who would inevitably be approached on the street by panhandlers—men of benevolent aspect with an expression of easy tolerance, not lacking humor. The prosecuting attorney naturally seeks the very antithesis of this. He wants a group of dour, puritanical, tight-lipped condemnatory pharisees; the type of man who in earlier days was, according to the melodramas, wont to be the village squire and a deacon in the church.

The jury box filled, the clerk brought the

two lawyers the small board bearing the names of the jurors in the order in which they were arranged. It was Gifford's privilege to question and exert the challenging power first. He began to examine them about the case, about their prejudices if they were aware of having any, regarding the acceptance of testimony from various sources, about their knowledge of the present case as derived from the newspapers, and as to whether they felt any convictions regarding it. Some of his questions would have appeared to the casual listener as quite irrelevant but they were nevertheless planned to expose any lurking humanitarianism which might later develop into a stubborn refusal to convict.

One by one he eliminated several candidates, a retired sea captain who, it developed, had recently been converted to religion through the death of his wife and the providential arrival of a famous evangelist; a middle-aged proprietor of a periodical stand who held the dangerous theory that we were all potential criminals given the necessary pressure of circumstance; a stoop-shouldered, gentle-voiced accountant who confessed that he believed that "nine times out of ten" he could tell a crook

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from an honest man by his expression, and he looked at Gordon significantly; and several more.

Then Burton began. He had, as Gordon knew, the right to challenge peremptorily fifteen jurors. He began to eliminate Gifford's most promising material. The two lawyers were, however, not directly antagonistic in this first brush. While Gifford was focussing his energies upon weeding out what he would have termed sentimentalists, Burton was less interested in this feature than in securing a group which possessed the desired mental qualities. He wanted men of sufficient imagination to comprehend the likelihood of a plot's being planned such as had enmeshed his client. Consequently he accepted certain men whom Gifford expected him to challenge, and refused others who, Gifford would have assumed, were promising jurors from the viewpoint of the defense. As finally made up, each lawyer felt that the jury was a particularly favorable one for his particular purpose. At the end of the morning session the jury was impaneled and the afternoon session opened with Gifford's address.

Without heat or undue fervor, he outlined



the charges which had been brought against the defendant, explained exactly how the various counts overlapped and why, and then launched into a history of the case as he claimed to have visualized it: of how the defendant in joining the organization of the Keller Construction Company had demanded that he be paid a bonus over and above his salary, of how, being a man of education, intelligence and forethought, he had, in all probability, even at that time planned the crime he later committed; of how, after having won the confidence of his employers and the various representatives of the government with whom he had come in contact, he had subtly and with Machiavellian cunning corrupted the principal witness for the prosecution, a man who would be tried later for the same offense, Joel Denton, whose reputation up to this time had been without blemish, and persuaded him to conspire to embezzle the money of the United States through the submission of padded weight returns. All this he asserted would be supported not merely by the testimony of witnesses but also by documentary evidence of a completely convincing character: the identical weight returns bearing the defendant's



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signature, the bonus cheques which were the motive for his crime bearing his indorsement, and other documents of a similar nature.

To the assertion which would undoubtedly be made that the Keller Construction Company profited far more than the defendant by this reprehensible crime, the prosecution wished to advance the well known fact that a criminal is interested only in his own personal gains; that wreckers in the old days often lured million-dollar ships upon dangerous shoals for the sake of the few thousand dollars they could salvage from the remains, that crooked promoters often bilked the public out of millions of dollars through methods which were so expensive, the use of stock salesmen and mailing campaigns, that only a residuum of perhaps fifty thousand finally seeped into the criminals' pockets.

Although it was indubitably true that innocent parties profited or appeared to profit by the defendant's activities, this was accidental and incidental. What he was interested in was his increased bonus cheque, and if to put five thousand a month into his own pocket it was necessary to cheat the govern-

ment of fifty thousand a month, he did not hesitate to do so. All history indicated that criminals were thus unprincipled, totally lacking in social conscience, selfish and self-centered to the last degree. In winding up, Gifford's manner indicated or seemed to indicate that in his opinion the guilt of the defendant was so completely established that he, for one, was amazed at his presumption in entering a plea of not guilty.

"Everything that I have charged, remember, will be attested to," he reminded them, "not merely by the evidence of witnesses but by the actual documents themselves. Facts not theories will prove my contentions. If, after you have heard the witnesses and examined the exhibits, you are of the opinion that the defendant is innocent, it is of course your duty to acquit him; but if, on the other hand, the exhibits, coupled with the testimony of the witnesses, several of whom are gentlemen of the highest standing and of prominent position in the business world, convince you of his guilt, it is your duty to find for conviction, to return a verdict for the people as against the defendant. Please accept my thanks for your attention."

A few moments' pause and then Gifford called out, "Mr. Joel Denton."

Denton came forward, took his seat in the witness chair and laid his hand on the Bible, looking as always like an instructor in penmanship covering the grammar schools of a third rate suburb. His few thin wisps of hair were carefully arranged across his bald head; his clothes, although he was a man in his early fifties, looked as though they were designed for a man twenty years his senior. It was not that they were not sound and whole but they were of a cut and pattern to be found to-day only in the shops of unfashionable tailors, with aged clienteles, located in obscure side streets.

Denton was a man so repressed and inarticulate by nature that he would obviously serve as an ideal perjurer. There was about him something so wooden and devitalized that his manner served in no degree to indicate the truth or falsity of his statements. He appeared in the court room exactly as he appeared in the daily routine, an automaton. Obviously a dull and stupid man, these qualities could not fail to be of service to him at this juncture. Although Burton might trip him up, the implication would be that natu-



rally a man so sodden in his mentality could be tripped up whether or not his story were true. Gifford began to question him to elicit his account of the series of events which had brought him to this pass, the hapless tool of a superior mind's nefarious schemes.

Yes, he was Joel Denton. He lived at present at the Craddock Hotel, Hereford. He had, up to recently, served as government inspector on the Bellport Breakwater job. He had previously served in a similar capacity on other government contracts. He had first met the defendant on the Bellport job when the latter came to it as general manager for the Keller Construction Company, a year ago the previous May.

As he swung into the story of how Gordon had first hinted at the plan of padding the weight returns, which he asserted was presented in a conversation which took place between them alone in the office at the quarry one afternoon a year ago the previous July, he betrayed not one outward sign of uneasiness. The only difference in his manner which could be noted was that he spoke more slowly and this was deemed natural enough for he realized that upon these details he would be



sharply cross-examined. He gave facts and figures as to just how the money thus secured was paid him by Gordon. The agreement was, it seemed, that they should divide equally every month the surplus sum which Gordon's bonus cheque contained over and above what it would have been had the weight figures been honestly rendered. This he explained was paid in currency.

During all this testimony Gordon sat watching Denton calmly and with the objective air with which one would observe a slightly dull drama. Denton never once glanced in his direction. Occasionally Burton would object to some of the witness's assertions, in several instances where Denton said he thought or believed that such and such was the case. Sometimes his objections were sustained, more often overruled. Many of them were made merely to impress the jury, not because he believed them technically valid.

Burton's cross-examination of Denton yielded but little. The man stuck to his story, stoutly denied that the Keller Construction Company had approached him in any illegitimate fashion regarding the case, although he admitted that Mr. Wellington had talked to

him prior to his arrest. This he asserted was merely for the purpose of questioning him about the whole matter, a quite natural and presumably innocent occurrence. Many of Burton's questions planned to imply that Denton had been bribed to involve Gordon as a scapegoat were objected to by Gifford and the objections sustained by Judge Elwood. The day's session ended with the cross-examination of Denton uncompleted. Gordon felt, nor did Burton deny, that Denton's testimony would be difficult to shake.

"So far as that goes," Burton explained as he and Captain Tucker sat with Gordon discussing the situation in the latter's room that evening, "in a case of this sort, which is unusual, the hope of the defense lies not so much in disproving the details of the evidence as in the obvious absurdity of the idea that a man sharp enough to instigate all this crookedness would be stupid enough to assume all the risk for so small a return. Had you been a crook, you would of course have sought a cut in the Keller Construction Company's profits in the deal, profits which nobody denies surpassed tenfold the sums you are charged with securing. Our handwriting experts will disprove

the forgeries but theirs will sustain them, which cancels that. But in my presentation of our side of the case to the jury I ought to be able to make them see the point I've just made. It all depends on that."

But Gordon as he sat alone in his room after his companions had gone to bed and reviewed the day's events felt far from optimistic. It was with a sense of escaping from a world of ominous reality to a dim dream realm of enchantment that he took from his pocket Patricia's letter which had arrived that evening and which in the press of discussing the day's events he had not had an opportunity to absorb. He re-read the last sentences:

I pray for you and with completest faith, my darling, for I know that a life which has yielded us so rich a gift as our wonderful love must spring from a power which is infinitely good and merciful. Our love has given me not only you but faith and a sense of God's immanence. I know that you will soon be free.

PATRICIA.

The glowing words quickened his pulse. His mood of depression lifted. The banally furnished, tasteless hotel room seemed for a moment to vanish, and about him he felt the sweet pressure of Patricia's arms.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

By eleven o'clock the next morning Burton had finished with Denton, and Gifford called his next witness, Mr. Richard B. Wellington, Vice-President and General Manager of the Keller Construction Company. Gordon's eyes were focussed upon him intently. This was the man, he felt, in whose brain had been conceived the entire plan of which the trial was the consequence. Keller, he felt certain, had but acquiesced uneasily while Wellington felt the pride and enthusiasm of the originator. As Wellington, his eyes bold and expressionless, met his gaze squarely, Gordon felt that his contempt for the man's villainy was nevertheless colored with a certain admiration. "The fellow is certainly a consistent crook," he reflected. "He doesn't lack nerve."

After the usual preliminary questions delivered by Gifford to establish the witness's connection with the case, the all important documents, the weight returns and endorsed



cheques, were identified by Wellington and admitted as evidence.

Wellington's story as elicited by the prosecuting attorney's questions was simple and direct. The weight returns had come in from Bellport signed by the defendant; had been entered and remailed to Washington without question; and the defendant's bonus cheques filled out to correspond and mailed him monthly. The first suspicion that the witness and his associates had that anything was wrong was when a Secret Service man had called at their office the previous August and announced that there was reason to believe that there was crooked work afoot. The government's suspicions had been aroused, it seemed, by a sudden increase in the tonnage shipped, and it had placed a man, McConnville, in the Bellport quarry as timekeeper. He had discovered the discrepancy between the true and false returns and had promptly notified the proper authorities. A short time after the initial visit, the government's representative had returned to the office; together they had gone over the books and records and had traced the crime to a conspiracy between Gordon and Denton; the latter being joint indorser with

Gordon of the weight returns. Denton had been subjected to a searching cross-examination and had confessed, implicating the defendant.

From the viewpoint of the Keller Construction Company, the occurrence had been most regrettable, necessitating as it did a return to the government of large sums thought to have been honestly earned and requiring a complete cessation of certain plans for expansion postulated upon the possession of liquid capital now greatly reduced. Wellington's manner was one of patient courtesy. The whole matter was a bad business, most unfortunate, but as it was obviously his duty as a citizen to aid the government in bringing the offenders to justice, he was ready to face the loss of time and the vexation of the trip with forbearance and patience. This was the impression he sought to create. The jury seemed to view him with that respect which the small town resident yields the metropolitan man of affairs and Gifford's own manner was unusually deferential. He understood the value of "staging" Wellington so that his evidence might carry its full weight.

Then came Burton's grilling. He knew

that Wellington's entire story was a lie out of whole cloth. He handled him from that premise. Gifford was constantly interposing objections to the questions and their implications, finally demanding of the Court whether or not Wellington was a witness or the defendant.

"He ought to be the defendant," asserted Burton in reply to the judge's warning. "I have witnesses to testify that those documents which this witness so glibly identifies are rank forgeries. And who, may I inquire, would be the principal beneficiary from committing the forgeries?"

Step by step Burton took Wellington over the entire chronicle. How did it happen that the increased tonnage which aroused the government's suspicions had made no impression upon him, the general manager, the man who knew exactly how many were carried upon the payroll, how much dynamite was used and so forth? To this the witness replied that he was not familiar nor was he supposed to be familiar with the details of the Bellport job at that time.

"But certainly somebody in authority was,"

objected the inquisitor. "If not you, Mr. Keller."

"Then subpoena Keller," snapped Wellington. "I merely assert that I wasn't."

Question after question was put in an effort to entangle the witness. Burton, it was evident, felt that to break down Wellington's story was indeed vital and he hoped so to enrage his victim that he would lose his head and expose himself. At one point Wellington, his eyes flashing, started for the lawyer. Burton stood calmly surveying him, his right hand clenched. The judge pounded vigorously on his desk; a bailiff stepped forward and the witness subsided. A laugh greeted the discovery that Captain Tucker who was seated in the front row of spectators had his leg over the rail in an effort to get into the fracas. Only his white hairs saved him from prompt ejection. The jury enjoyed all this excitement but Judge Elwood was plainly annoyed. Burton, however, kept within his legal rights, accepting the bench's rulings as to objections without demur.

Wellington did begin to flounder a bit just as the session ended. Burton had him contra-



dicting himself as to exactly what conversation transpired between him and Denton at the interview which both admitted had taken place prior to the latter's arrest. The two men's accounts did not completely correspond and Wellington's manner in detailing the conversation was plainly not that of one detailing events from memory. It was rather that of a man inventing. But the lunch hour saved him for the time being.

As Burton, Gordon and Captain Tucker walked down the corridor upon emerging from the court room at the head of the stairs they came face to face with Wellington.

"You damned, lying, perjuring, hell-begotten sneak! You damned, dirty black-hearted sculpin!" exploded Tucker and with a right smash to Wellington's jaw he lifted him from his feet and the man went crashing down the broad stairs to the bottom. He lay stunned. Some court attendants carried him into an ante-room but it was not until a half hour later that he was able to walk weakly across the square to his hotel.

"By God, I otter killed him! I otter jumped on the dirty skunk as he lay there an' kicked the guts out o' him," exclaimed Tucker

heatedly when his companions remonstrated with him, and the old man simmered along during the entire lunch chewing his meat with ferocious fervor as though he were devouring Wellington.

Wellington failed to appear during the afternoon, Gifford explaining that he had "met with an accident," but the next morning he appeared, a cut over his right eye, and the inquisition was resumed. When Burton finally released him, it was to Gifford's relief. The man had not been caught in a spectacular lie but the general impression was, one felt, far from favorable to the prosecution. The jury, if one could judge by manner and facial expression, felt that there was something fishy about this big business man from New York. Burton had forced him into the position, trying to his vanity, of appearing extremely ill-informed about his own business. The jury was forced to conclude that either the man was incredibly unbusinesslike or was from some ulterior motive pretending to be.

## CHAPTER XL

THE trial droned on. Several days were consumed in the testimony of opposing experts regarding Gordon's signature. The chirography was subjected to microscopic analysis and enlargements exhibited to the jury. The forgeries had, as a matter of fact, been prepared very cleverly and while a laboriously traced signature is quickly exposed under the microscope, these had been very bafflingly executed. They were obviously not tracings. But were they copies? That was a problem for the jury to decide after the specialists had testified. After the case from the prosecution's viewpoint had been impregnably established and, if one were to credit the witnesses's testimony, that had been accomplished, Gifford announced that he rested. Burton then arose and in a speech of considerable length but which nevertheless clearly held the jury's attention, outlined the situation from his viewpoint.

"You must seek for the motive, gentlemen,

in the commission of a crime and I ask you who had the stronger motive in this instance, my client, who it is asserted profited to the extent of a paltry few thousand per month, or his employers who profited tenfold as much? As to the testimony you have heard, does the evidence of a confessed embezzler carry weight with you, the evidence of a man who, if his testimony is true, stands confessed a thief and, what to many is even worse, a cowardly turncoat—a welcher? That man's evidence is true in so far as it convicts him. He did undoubtedly conspire to manipulate the weight returns. He conspired not with my client, however, but with the same elements which have bribed him with the offer of princely sums to stand here and perjure himself so that the dark forces which planned, instigated and executed this entire plot might escape. He seeks to implicate my client, gentlemen, for exactly the same motive which actuated him in the first place, lust for money.

“There is no question as to his ethics or rather lack of them; he has himself told you. Does the leopard change his spots? If he would betray his sacred trust for money, would he hesitate to swear away an innocent man's



reputation and liberty for more money? A crime such as has been committed against my client, gentlemen, seems to you who, I assume, are men of probity and integrity, well nigh inconceivable but I, as a lawyer, realize, unfortunately realize, how frequently such plots are planned and only too successfully executed." He went on to cite many instances. He pointed out the manifest absurdity of Gordon's being content with such small gains when by approaching his employers he might have netted much larger sums, nor did he neglect to refer repeatedly to the defendant's past record which the prosecution after careful investigation had had to grant was stainless.

Following Burton's speech, the cashier of the Bellport bank testified regarding the details of Gordon's deposits, evidence which seemed to contradict the prosecution regarding the amounts of the bonus cheques. Various character witnesses were then called to testify to their confidence in Gordon's character, their faith in his innocence. And finally the defendant himself took the stand.

There was a stir in the court room as Gordon took his seat in the witness chair, laid his hand on the Bible and swore to tell the truth. His

manner was quiet, yet resolute. He spoke distinctly and with an air of candor which it was evident registered favorably with his listeners. After a few questions Burton left him to tell the whole story in his own way. He began with his original connection with the Keller Construction Company, passed briefly over the period culminating in his arrest and then in explicit detail narrated everything which had taken place in his interview with Wellington at the New York office. Gifford's objections were squelched by Judge Elwood who was himself interested in hearing Gordon's side of the story.

Burton watched the faces of the jury closely. With that intuitive sense that an able lawyer develops he felt vaguely uneasy about several of the occupants of the jury box. Some of them who originally had listened with eager interest to every detail had during the past few days sat with expressionless faces as though for some reason they had already come to a definite decision. And yet so far as the evidence itself was concerned, there was no reason for this attitude.

Gifford began his cross-examination of Gordon. He knew of course that an interview

had taken place in the Construction Company's offices upon Gordon's arrival in New York following his arrest, and it was obviously important for him to discredit the defendant's version of the conversation: that Keller and Wellington had tried to bribe him to plead guilty.

After futile efforts to trip Gordon upon points connected with his account of his method of indorsing the monthly weight returns, he finally reached this all-important matter.

"Now about this alleged interview. It took place after you had been arrested. You had every reason, if innocent of the charges which at that time you knew had been made, to surround yourself with every safeguard. And yet you assert that you did not even take the simple and obvious precautionary measure of having a witness accompany you."

Gifford's tone was insultingly incredulous.

"It would be interesting to have you explain that. You haven't one witness to support your assertion that you were offered a bribe—have you, Mr. Gordon? Only those who say that you *said* that such a conversation took place."

A sudden movement in the rear of the



packed court room broke the momentary silence which followed Gifford's query. A woman rose suddenly.

"I can testify that Mr. Gordon was offered a bribe to plead guilty." Her voice sharpened by tense emotion rose clear, high-pitched and penetrating above the confusion. "I am Patricia Keller. I'll be glad to tell the whole story."

Patricia, quite unaware of the breach of court etiquette she had committed, stood waiting for the uproar she had caused to subside. A bailiff had promptly started for her: Burton had sprung to his feet: Gifford, certain that Burton had staged this theatrical coup, was shouting incoherent objections: the judge sat in speechless amazement.

Out of the clamor it developed that Burton, instantly adapting his program to this new factor, demanded the right to call Patricia as a witness.

A target for the gaze of hundreds she walked forward and seated herself. Her eyes as they sought Gordon's betrayed defiance and asked forgiveness. For days they had wrangled over this issue. But Gordon's plea that if she insisted upon testifying the prose-



cution would call her father, whose denial would cancel the effect of her statements, had secured her promise of silence. His real objection was of course that he could not bear the thought of Patricia's being forced into the position of condemning her own father to prison.

Only too plainly she showed the effect of the strain under which, waiting for news in New York, she had labored. Her eyes, abnormally large by contrast with her thin cheeks, shone with unnatural brightness. And yet never had she looked more beautiful: a beauty that the former Patricia, unawakened, her soul buried beneath the fleshpots, could never have achieved.

For a long, long instant her eyes and Gordon's met and held. It was as though through some psychic sixth sense they actually communed. Then Gifford resumed his badgering.

But the incident had shaken the prosecutor's poise. Gordon's explanation delivered with simple candor that he had taken no witnesses for the obvious reason that he foresaw that his employers would in that case avoid committing themselves destroyed the effect of the question to which it was a reply. Gifford wondered if

he would shortly find himself prosecuting his own witness, Wellington. Certainly someone had connived with Denton. If Gordon were acquitted, clearly the culprits must be sought "higher up": a fact obvious, of course, to Wellington and Keller.

From the moment of Patricia's advent Gifford's inquisition seemed to lack vigor and penetration. He failed completely in his attempt to shake the witness's story and finally expressed himself as satisfied. His manner indicated or sought to indicate that here was a criminal who was so dexterous that even he, skilled as he was in eliciting the truth, despaired of wrenching it from this arch crook, this man with a face which belied his character, with histrionic ability to deceive the most skeptical.

Although it was a violation of the established *modus operandi*, extremely trying to Judge Elwood's rigidly legal mind, Patricia was at Burton's request then put upon the stand.

Prompted at first by a few questions she was soon well into her narrative and was suffered to proceed without interruption. Her voice low but clear could be heard distinctly in every corner of the great room. The

newspaper men absorbed by the sheer drama of this piquant situation and forgetting to take notes sat motionless, like the rest of the spectators, hanging upon every word.

She went over her interview with Gordon at Bayport following his return from New York; told of her talk with her father at Jasmine; his frank confession of the facts: that he and Wellington had doctored the weight returns and connived with the inspector to cast the blame on Gordon; her ultimatum and its results.

Dwarfed by the massive bench and the impressive dimensions of the huge court room, she looked as she sat in the witness chair, her fur coat thrown open displaying her simple blue frock, pathetically small and helpless.

"I urged my father to confess and clear Mr. Gordon," she explained, "and I am sure that he would have, had it not been, as he pointed out, that others were involved. His partner, Mr. Wellington, for example."

Necks were craned to study the man named who sat as impassive as the very granite of Bayport's shores.

"And the inspector, Denton. I tried to induce Mr. Gordon to permit me to tell all this



but he dissuaded me. He has old-fashioned ideals of chivalry and he could not bear to think of profiting by the testimony of his accuser's daughter, especially as I am to become his wife after this is all over."

A court officer had to rap for order at the buzz of comment this caused. It was too deliciously romantic, this idyll of love and loyalty suddenly laid bare. It was as though a breath of lilacs and May meadows were suddenly wafted through the fetid atmosphere of the overheated, overcrowded court room.

The eyes of a "sob-sister" on a Boston daily who had come down on the long chance that the trial might offer a story glowed in anticipation of the coveted front page position her account would occupy the following morning.

"But I couldn't stand it waiting there in New York, with Douglas—Mr. Gordon—here, his back to the wall: these perjurers seeking to railroad him to prison." Her voice rang with indignation. "I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. I thought I'd go mad. I felt my place was here with him. So I broke my promise to him and came. I hope that what I've told will help make the truth clear."

Her eyes swept the jury box. "It was a



hard thing to do for I love my father too. I am sure that he never deliberately planned all this. And I realize that my words sentence him to . . .” Her voice broke and she stepped down. Blinded by tears, she stumbled. It was Gordon’s hand, his arm half encircling her, which guided her to her chair.

The tension snapped and for a few minutes the tumult raged unheeded. Judge Elwood himself was too shaken to play his usual rôle of strict disciplinarian. Finally he restored order and quiet.

Gifford, it developed, waived his cross-examination privilege. Also he betrayed no wish to demand a postponement while Keller was subpoenaed. The truth was that he feared to put Keller on the stand. If Patricia’s story were true, and he feared it was, Burton’s cross-examination would merely serve to confirm it. Then the case, already in jeopardy, would be irrevocably lost. It occurred to him to wonder as his eyes fell upon Wellington at the latter’s aplomb. He sat coolly surveying the scene as though he had no misgivings as to the outcome. And yet an acquittal meant serious danger for him.

The lawyers made their concluding argu-

ments. Burton displayed an eloquence which was genuinely stirring. Judge Elwood himself sat spellbound. In all his years of practice he had never before heard so masterly a plea. An obscure provincial jurist, he was inclined to resent the presence of this famous advocate, to envy him his fame and financial success; but even Elwood could not conceal his admiration for the forensic power which Burton released. As he concluded his peroration, the vibrant overtones of his final words echoing through the vaulted heights of the court room, salvos of applause burst forth. It was of course out of order but Elwood was so stirred that he forbore for a moment to hush the tumult. Gifford sought to discount the effect of the speech by praising it with a touch of sarcasm. "My esteemed opponent," he said, "whose oratorical power has successfully swayed the emotions of many juries."

The case was then ready for the jury. Elwood turned to the jurors and delivered his elucidation of the law, his "instructions." This completed he told the jury to retire and the matter was on the knees of the gods.

A sheriff's aid approached Gordon and led him and his group, Patricia, Burton and Cap-

tain Tucker, into a large gaunt room at the rear, in which the prisoner was to await the verdict. Tucker, with the ready tact which one finds so often among those who might be supposed to lack it, maneuvered the party so that the lovers were isolated in one corner.

"My darling!" breathed Gordon as unashamed, Patricia sought his arms. "My poor storm-tossed child! It's so much harder for you than for any of us. And to have to denounce your father! I wanted to spare you that. I'm not worth it all."

"It was such a relief to come." She strained closer. "The horror of the past weeks. The aching torture. Won't you ever understand?" She stopped as though hopeless of his comprehension. "Douglas. I love you." She spoke with simple impressiveness. "I am a veritable part of you. The very flesh of your flesh. Whatever you suffer I suffer tenfold. For that is what love does to one. You would understand if things were reversed. What is my father to me now? He happened to be my father. But *you* . . ." With a clinging kiss she tried to tell him what she felt. She sighed.

"Those nights! I finally told old Mr. Clapham that I had to come. He was hurt that I



hadn't confided in him—gave me a leave of absence—as long as I needed.”

Tenderly he stroked her bright hair, caressed her cheek.

“I don't deserve it.” His voice was husky. “You glorious girl. Whatever happens,” she winced, “nothing can rob me of this. Your love.” He spoke the word softly, humbly. “I am not worthy. But I'll try to be.” They clung close as though they felt that here was something eternal, inviolate, over which Time could not triumph nor circumstance destroy. Indomitable, unconquerable their love seemed to them the one rock of reality in a world bedreamed in illusions. The grim doom which menaced lent through contrast with their exaltation an almost unbearable poignancy to their emotion.

They turned to Burton and Captain Tucker.

“There wa'n't a soul in that court room that didn't know they was hearing God's truth when you talked. I could feel it, Miss Patricia.” Captain Tucker spoke with earnest emphasis. “I'll bet that skunk Wellington is beatin' it out o' town this minute. Coz they'll nab him sure. He's the feller that doped the whole thing out an' then got your father into



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it. We'll all be out o' this in another half hour. Won't we, Mr. Burton?"

Burton smiled. "I'm hopeful," he replied briefly.

"What time is it, Parson?" Tucker turned to Gordon.

As Gordon consulted his watch—it was four o'clock—he drew out with it a plain envelope which had been delivered to him as he left the hotel after lunch. Deep in discussion with Burton he had absently thrust it into his pocket unopened. He opened it now.

It contained a single sheet on which was typed one sentence. Gordon paled and passed it to Burton. He read it aloud,

The jury has been fixed to convict

A FRIEND.

An hour later the verdict was returned:  
"Guilty!"

## CHAPTER XLI

IT was dark when Patricia emerged from the Grand Central. But was it Patricia: this sagging broken thing with eyes dull and red from tears? Like an automaton she had come to Boston from Bellport: driven across the city to the South Station and boarded the train for New York. She recalled nothing of the journey. Not a picture of the objective world had registered on the retina of her consciousness. Two scenes and two only—one real and the other imaginary—both equally vivid had been constantly before her eyes. Obsessions. One was when Gordon tearing himself from her arms was led away: to the jail. The other her Doré-like envisaging of the grim horrors which faced him.

“Look out, lady!” A man barely avoided a collision with her as she stepped out on Forty-Second Street and stared back over his shoulder curiously as he passed. With unseeing eyes she stood struggling for strength, for sanity, for control. She had not believed her-

self capable of such poignant emotion. This thing, which first dealt a crushing blow then probed cruelly. She saw Gordon in prison, beaten by cowardly turnkeys, racked by inhuman tortures, exposed to loathsome diseases, fed with befouled food; to emerge, if he survived, years later, a broken man, his life a twisted, riven travesty.

A taxi stood at the curb. She stepped in feebly and drove home. Her step as she climbed to her apartment sounded like that of an old, old woman.

"Pat . . . what's the matter?" Martha paled as she saw her face. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I was afraid when you didn't wire." Then came the blessed relief of tears. Both the girls wept unashamed. Convulsive sobs racked Patricia. Over and over she repeated, "And I prayed so hard. There is no God. I prayed so hard. There is no God."

But outside the city was gay and charged with that festive spirit which marks the dinner hour. Work was over for the day. Happy throngs flooded the restaurants and the Great White Way. What was the fate of one obscure individual to New York? After a time her sobs subsided, but to Martha the stony

despair which succeeded them was even worse. She resisted Martha's entreaties that she come out to a restaurant. No, she could not eat. But she insisted that Martha go. She wished to be alone. Finally her friend left her promising to return within an hour.

Patricia went to the window and stood looking out over the city. She spoke, half aloud. "He is my man," she said. "I love him with every fiber of me. I love him. I love him. I love him so much that I know that death is meaningless. Death could not sever that bond. But this living death!" Her whole body was shaken with a tremor of despair. "And after they've tortured him and broken him, he'll die. My wonderful lover . . . my husband. And my father did it. My father! I am defiled with his blood. But he'll pay . . . God . . . how I'll make him pay! And Wellington." Her eyes shone with a strange light. Her hands which had been twisting and clenching the cord of the window shade suddenly broke it and with a snap the shade scurried to the top.

Martha found her when she returned seated before the window gazing blindly over the roof tops.



Keller had received the news by wire in his office within an hour of the rendering of the verdict. Now that the irrevocable had happened he was genuinely shocked. A disagreement would perhaps have served his purpose as well, although that would have meant the possibility of further search for those responsible for the embezzlement. John B. Keller was a man far from scrupulous, but this whole business of shunting the blame for his crookedness to another's shoulders sickened him. It was something he would never have deliberately planned. His policy, shaped in large measure by Wellington, traced to the jungle instinct of self-preservation. And somewhere within the man, too, was a streak of superstition. He feared that somehow, somewhere, vengeance would be visited upon him.

For a long time he sat with a serious face, telegram before him, seeking some solution of the problem. After a time he could circulate a petition for Gordon's pardon or a remittance of his sentence. But nothing could be done at present. He was disturbed, too, about Patricia. The only person in the world he loved would never forgive him this deed. He saw

himself, a lonely old man, scorned by both his children, deriving what satisfaction he might from the companionship of his wife, a woman for whom he felt but the most tepid sentiments.

Then too he was constantly harassed by business worries. Bad luck on the Gulf job had dogged him for months. A storm had sent two valuable scows to the bottom; one of his dredges had sunk in New York harbor. The Gulf job was tied up with a strike. And an ugly situation had developed in his relations with Wellington. They were at loggerheads over the question of expanding to include the Farley-McCabe Corporation. The younger man urged it strongly; the older feared the added risks and responsibilities. They had quarreled about it bitterly and now spoke as little as possible to each other. It began to look as though he might fail despite all his devious schemes to cheat the government. Often of late he had been oppressed by the sense that he was pursued by a remorseless fate; that, stripped first of his honor, then of his children's respect, he would end up bereft of the money for which he had sacrificed all else.

"I feel as though I'd welcome the chance to

decamp with a few thousand dollars and start over again," he sometimes found himself reflecting. It was in such a mood that he rolled down his desk at five o'clock and drove home.

"Well, Gordon's convicted," he informed his wife briefly as they sat down to dinner.

"And the sentence?"

"Be remanded for his sentence later. Ten years, I suppose—'bout that."

From her husband Mrs. Keller had wormed all the facts in the case. She knew exactly as well as he how grievously Gordon had been wronged. But unlike her husband she was incapable of honesty with herself. To preserve the Keller fortune Gordon must be sacrificed. To sacrifice deliberately an inoffensive and completely innocent person was opposed to all the platitudes she had accepted from childhood; therefore it was necessary, in order to keep herself in countenance, to invent some grounds for disapproving their victim.

"That settles his affair with Patricia," she snapped. "I imagine he thought that by entrapping her he would in some way escape."

Keller surveyed her with incredulous dislike. "Let's not add insult to injury," he suggested. "I'm none too proud of this whole filthy busi-



ness. If you know anything, you know that Gordon is incapable of what you imply. If I know Pat, I know that she's through with us for life. And I'm damned if I altogether blame her. I got a letter from the boy yesterday. He said that if Gordon was convicted he was through too. 'Twould be his last letter."

Suddenly his anger left him. Their home seemed so empty and silent with the children gone. He pushed his plate aside and sat in a brown study. Mrs. Keller pursed her lips and remained silent. Her husband, she thought, had no conception of the difficulties she faced, the stories she had to concoct to explain to her friends Patricia's disappearance and Clifford's abandonment of his career at Harvard.

Keller left the next course untouched. He sat in silence, probing within himself for the source of the unhappiness he felt. Of late for the first time in his life he had begun to question the standards by which he had shaped his career, to challenge the code by which he and his associates lived. To swindle the government had not demanded a revolutionary revision of his ethics. He had easily justi-



fied himself upon the score that plainly the job had been accepted at too low a figure. It followed logically that the government was profiting unfairly at his expense. To doctor the weight returns had been only a rough and ready method of attaining justice. But this business of Gordon, this was a different matter. He wished that he had never known the man personally; had never developed that cordial liking and admiration for his character.

“And it all springs from this damn fool New York idea of keeping up with the Joneses,” he reflected with irritation. “I was happier on my first contract when we lived on the job and spent maybe forty dollars a week. I thought I had to throw a front for the youngsters. Now it seems they didn't care a rap for it all. Pat's a stenographer, the boy's in overalls. And they demand nothing more.” He picked listlessly at his dessert then slipped into his overcoat and stepped over to his club. He knew that his wife could never understand these new conceptions. She was sold body and soul to the success-at-any-price school.

## CHAPTER XLII

Two days after the verdict John Keller sat at his desk going over the reports on the Gulf job. He examined them incredulously. Imported strike-breakers had failed to keep up shipments, while the payroll had tremendously increased. Bankruptcy seemed inevitable. The figures sickened him. Although as a younger man he might have set his jaw and fought desperately, now he lacked spirit and resiliency. He felt himself beaten. Keller's red beefy face sagged lifelessly in the wan wintry light.

His telephone rang. "Miss Keller to see you."

"Show her in." He swung around in his chair. He had no heart for what he felt impended. Patricia entered, her face expressionless. Her grief had robbed her of her beauty. The flame of life seemed to have been extinguished. Keller gazed at her in shocked wonder as she sat down, staring dumbly into space.

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"God knows I'm sorry, Pat," he said huskily. "I wish to God it had never happened." She seemed not to have heard him.

"I've felt—lately—that I might kill you," she said finally; "you and Wellington. . . . I did denounce you . . . but it's no use. It wouldn't accomplish anything." Her voice was muted and colorless. She seemed indeed to Keller like one who had just risen from a long and racking illness, so complete and final was her collapse. "It wouldn't bring him back. I don't understand it all." Her voice sank to an almost inaudible murmur. She had forgotten his presence and muttered brokenly to herself. "I suppose I'm being punished for something, but that doesn't explain *his* case. He never did anything. He'll never come out of prison alive. It's a living hell. I know—I've read. You have killed him." Her voice died away to silence.

Keller said nothing. What was there to say? He was trying to adjust himself to this development. He had not realized how hard Patricia would take it; how deeply she cared. Through the closed windows came the subdued hum of the streets, crowded with the late afternoon traffic. He arose and paced nervously



up and down, up and down. Patricia sat staring sightlessly at her hands which lay listlessly in her lap.

In the outside office rose a girl's voice in gay laughter. It was the girl at the switchboard bantering someone over the telephone. "I'll bet you pull that line on every girl. I say," she spoke louder, "I'll bet you pull that stuff on every girl. Some kidder! Oh, I know who you are all right."

Keller stopped at last and stood looking out the window. He had not foreseen this. Always a kind, indulgent, typically American father, he sought to understand exactly how circumstance had maneuvered him into this position. It seemed to him as though he would do anything, absolutely anything, to escape this consequence of his acts. Some power, he could not identify it more closely, some implacable force seemed bent upon visiting a merciless punishment for his transgressions. It had attacked his one vulnerable point, his daughter, the one living soul whom he loved.

And in that incalculable mixture of elements which comprise a personality, a human soul, obscure reactions were taking place. He



felt as though he were being broken upon the wheel, so powerful were the conflicting forces which exerted their pressure. Self-interest bade him sit tight. But though self-interest had always been his monitor it had never come into such direct conflict with other potent motives: his deep affection for Patricia, his desire to retain his self-respect. And the sick disgust with which he viewed the near future, the certain crash of the Keller Construction Company, bankruptcy, cross-examination by creditors; the whole humiliating mechanism of a commercial failure was a powerful factor. Then there was the menace of Denton whom it would now be impossible to pay in full. What would come out of the retort in which these elements were working, acting and reacting one upon the other?

He was recalled to the immediate problem by Patricia's voice. "Yes, you have killed him," she repeated lifelessly. "And I think you have killed me. I hope so. I don't suppose you understand. The pictures . . . they keep coming. I try to shut them out," her hand went to her eyes, dropped helplessly. "They torture them, kick them, beat them. I know . . . I've read. They truss them up

and leave them for days in solitary. I wish I didn't know . . . I wish . . . I didn't know. The pictures . . . I can't shut them out. I can't sleep. All night . . . pictures. Terrible pictures. Rats, vermin, bugs, filth, vile men. It's my head. The weight on my head is what I can't stand. Please take it away." She had begun to speak suddenly with an hysterical fervor, her eyes gleamed strangely. Keller looked at her with quick apprehension. His heavy red face paled.

"There, there," he said soothingly; "keep calm. Maybe it'll come out all right. Burton is sure to appeal." But his own voice sounded strained, unnatural. Patricia appeared not to hear him. When she spoke again it was quietly—hopelessly—gazing straight before her.

"You see you can't understand. You've never known love. Few people do. It's a terrible thing. If anything happens to the one you love, you suffer ten times as much as he does. I always longed for love but now I see it's a curse. It's just a trap to catch you in and torture you. I thought it came from God. I thought it brought happiness. But I know better now. There isn't any God.

Or if there is, He hasn't anything to do with this world." There was something horrible in the calm detached way she spoke these words.

"No, I'm sure that God hasn't anything to do with this world," she went on reflectively, "else this wouldn't have happened. I never thought . . . I never realized how life can hurt. It can't hurt everyone so much. It's when you love it can hurt. It hurts me too much to bear. Those pictures. That terrible weight. But I can stop it. There are ways. I think there is a God somewhere, and a place where love is not a curse. I'll wait for Douglas . . . he'll soon come. God would not keep us apart. But in this world if they see you love, they punish you for it. Perhaps we've all died and this life is the hell we're condemned to."

Keller was startled. He grasped her implication. And from his knowledge of Patricia, the unlikelihood of her making an empty threat, he knew that this was none. The calm certitude, the quiet resignation of her manner were ominous. Wearily she arose, walked weakly, blindly toward the door.

Everything in life is relative. A disaster which at first sight seems utterly crushing may



in the light of a more deadly thrust seem comparatively trivial. Bankruptcy, prison, disgrace—all now became to Keller unimportant. That he should be perhaps the murderer of his own daughter, the one person for whom he deeply cared, this was Fate's final irrevocable blow. Suddenly he attained a truer perspective. Stretched upon the rack as he was, he saw but one solution and he took it. Patricia had not anticipated it, had not even conceived its possibility. Yet given the torsion of all the various forces which exerted their pressure, it was inevitable.

"Sit down, Pat," he ordered. "Wait . . . there may be a way." She sank into a chair. He stood, silently thinking. "I'm going to clean up the whole business," he said abruptly. "I ought to have done it before. Thank God it's not too late." He stopped, developing in his mind the details of his plan. "It's as simple as A, B, C."

"I'll prepare a complete explanation of the whole dirty business: give all the facts and figures, exonerate Gordon of course; try to clear Wellington—have my signature witnessed . . . then I'll decamp. I'll try to throw 'em off the scent by pretending suicide.



Whether that works or not, I'm not afraid. The average fugitive gets caught because the average crook is mentally subnormal anyway. The police have better brains than their quarry; but they can't out-think me. And remember you never hear of those who are never captured.

"I'll draw fifteen or twenty thousand from the bank—I've got it coming to me—and start over again somewhere. Change my name, my appearance, my line of work, everything. I'll have to work fast and discreetly but I'll be ready for the getaway within a week. I'm getting old. I'm no longer ambitious for success. I'll scratch along all right, somehow. And I'll keep your mother going by sending her money through the mail; only don't think it will be postmarked from within a thousand miles of where I am. Maybe she'll collect my life insurance." Keller spoke with an enthusiasm he hadn't evinced for weeks.

Patricia looked up incredulously. Was this a trick, a clumsy attempt to alleviate her anguish?

Then she saw that he meant it. "But your business . . . the company?"

"Going to blow up anyway."

At length the full force of his proposal penetrated her numbed consciousness. Heaven opened before her. She laid her head on her arm and the tears poured forth. Tears of relief? Joy? Pity for her father and his future? She did not know. She knew only that miraculously a crushing load had lifted; her every nerve seemed to relax. At least her father had redeemed his worst offense, that against Gordon. And as he said, he would probably escape.

"There, there now, puss," he patted her bent head. "Don't cry. You've got your man back. Now you'll be happy. And I'll feel a good deal better myself. I feel happier this minute than I have for months."

As she arose to leave a few minutes later she felt torn with conflicting emotions. She had regained her lover and in the same act her father—the kindly generous comrade who all her life had meant so much to her—only to lose him again for always. It could have been so different. There was a sincere affection between the two men . . . had been, anyway. Now in gaining one, she lost the other. And there was no escape—no solution. What a price love exacted. Yet it must be paid.

Nor did it occur to her to hesitate. Better that her father disappear into a silence as profound and eternal as death, than that he be subject to the tortures of prison life.

But her heart bled. This was perhaps the last time she would ever see him, for fearing to involve her in his daring coup he had forbidden further contact. "Oh, Dad, I might have known you wouldn't let Douglas pay!" she exclaimed.

He winced. "I might have; but I'm glad I haven't," he was honest enough to say. A long embrace—a stifled sob—and the door closed.

He stepped to the window where for a long time he stood staring at the electric sign which faced the Sixth Avenue L station at Forty-second Street. Here was the arena in which he'd fought his way upwards from the time of his arrival as a youth in his twenties, this beautiful New York—colorful, seductive, intoxicating . . . never more beautiful than now in the pale glow of the early twilight. A faint haze—a veil flung over the sharp outlines of the buildings—obscured the garish detail and left but the Babylonian grandeur, the monolithic masses which are New



York. Floating aloft, a touch from the Arabian Nights, the Bush Building hung like a golden lamp. And now he had to leave it . . . forever.

He had played with all the skill and daring he possessed and not without success. Now it was over. He had lost and was forever debarred from another chance. In some alien land, disguised under a pseudonym, he would eke out a lonely obscure existence, bereft of the one he loved, Patricia; seeking what solace he could salvage from memories of happier years. He had failed. Yet was his failure entirely one of circumstances? Did it not lie deeper? Had he not been seeking a worthless prize?

In thirty years John Keller had read but one poem. And from it arose to the surface of his consciousness a quatrain,

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,  
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty face  
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone.

He turned to his desk, sat down heavily, and began writing his confession.









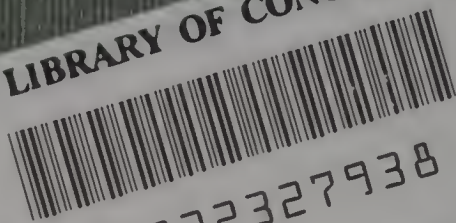






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